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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[A VILLAGE COQUETTE.]

TRUE TILL DEATH; OR, A FAILURE OF JUSTICE.

CHAPTER V.

EAVESDROPPING.

Oh, now, for ever,
Farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!

THE next day saw Hilda as usual busy with her farm work. The dairy and poultry-yard demanded her particular attention, and as she stood with her feathered pets around her in the daintily clean poultry-yard, the sunlight shining on her golden hair and on the white plumage of the Dorkings, the pride of the farmyard that thronged around her, a prettier picture of rural beauty it would have been difficult to imagine.

Her sweet face was beaming with smiles and her soft blue eyes shone with happiness as she distributed the grain to her favourites and marked how the little ones followed her eagerly from pen to pen without fear, and how the old hens marched clucking after their broods with the greatest confidence in her good intentions towards them.

Then, the wants of all the community in the poultry-yard having been satisfied, she passed on to the dairy and inspected the large pans of milk, thick with cream, that stood in long rows in the cool, shady, tile-floored room, and then on to the garden, where Harry was hard at work

turning up the rich earth and preparing for the first sowing of peas and French beans.

"The young master will be here to-day, I suppose, Miss Hilda?—Mister Vanstone, I mean, for sure," for Hilda had started and turned colour, thinking for a moment that the old man meant Gerald Ray, and that his presence at the farm the evening before was known.

"Mr. Vanstone! Oh, yes, Harry, he will be here this evening, I hope. How are you getting on, Harry?" she answered.

"Well, miss," and he stopped to wipe his forehead—"well, miss, the ground be good enough, but the birds and the worms they be dreadful, miss; seems as if useless beasts breed and multiply faster nor useful ones in this world, miss. Now, Miss Hilda, will you please to tell me what I am to put in this patch here? Last year we put spring turnips and the year before beans. What will you please to have this year?"

And then there followed a long discussion on gardening matters, and so amidst the occupations that daily fell to her lot the hours passed quickly away, and at sunset Hilda found herself eagerly looking down the Stoneyvale road from the seat at the end of the terrace and wondering why Dennis did not come.

How surprised he would be to hear of Gerald's return, above all about Gerald's marriage! She hoped he would take a liberal view of it and not feel angry at it, and with such thoughts in her mind she waited and waited, looking anxiously out over the darkening landscape till the clock struck seven, and yet Dennis did not come, and with a sigh of disappointment she walked away into the house and sat down in the parlour to her tea alone.

When Eleanor Merton rose from her bed that morning a sense of wild exultation filled her soul. The sound of her shrill singing as she carolled a Spanish song reached the ears of old Mrs. Merton in her sick room, and she wondered what had happened to make the girl who of late had seemed so moody and discontented so cheerful.

"She is a changeable creature!" thought the old lady. "One day dull, another gay. I suppose the foreign blood in her veins makes her different to the rest of us;" and indeed in the old lady's eyes this "foreign blood" was a sufficient excuse, and quite accounted for all Eleanor's eccentricities.

When Eleanor came down to breakfast, however, her mood had changed again; the song had ceased and she had become thoughtful and pre-occupied and replied in few words to her grandmother's remarks. And the day wore slowly on till evening came, when she grew restless, and slipping on her cloak and hat left the cottage by the back door and hastened along the road to Stoneyvale.

It was about seven o'clock, and when Eleanor reached the hill between Stoneyvale and Ray Farm, from whence a distant view of each homestead could be obtained, she stopped and listened attentively for the sounds of wheels or horses' feet, but all was still.

"It must be past seven o'clock; he will be passing soon," she thought. "I'll wait though," and she seated herself on a stile hard by and waited silently and expectantly.

The sun had set and it was getting rapidly dark when the sound of hasty footsteps fell on her ear, and starting up she saw Dennis Vanstone coming up the hill at a quick pace.

"Ha! Eleanor! Good evening," he said, smiling. "Out on one of your lonely rambles again? Well, it's a lovely evening for a walk."

"Yes," she replied, with a slight embarrassment in her tone and looking at him inquiringly. "You are on your way to the farm, I suppose?"

"Yes. I was at Garford all yesterday, and didn't get home till late," he answered.

"Yes, yes, I know. I heard you pass last night," she said, and sighed. "You've not heard the news then?"

"News! No. What news?" he asked, in surprise.

"Hasn't Hilda told you? Then perhaps I had better not have spoken. But—but I must, I must!" and she clasped her hands together and her cheeks flushed.

"No! Hilda has told me nothing. What is it? Is anything wrong, Eleanor? For Heaven's sake speak and tell me! Is she ill?" he cried, in sudden terror.

"No, no. Calm yourself," replied Eleanor, almost contemptuously. "She is well, very well. I saw her last night."

"You saw her last night! Where?" he asked.

"By the orchard gate of the farm. I was passing and saw her," and she paused. "Ah! now can I say it?" she muttered, and turned her face away.

"You saw her in the orchard? Well, what then?" said Dennis, half angry, half puzzled.

For a moment Eleanor was silent, then turning suddenly on Dennis and laying her hand on his arm, she said:

"Do you know that Gerald Ray has come back?"

Dennis turned deadly pale.

"Gerald Ray!" he whispered.

"Yes. He was walking with Hilda last night—I saw him," she answered, firmly.

"You saw him! Why was I not told of this before?" he cried.

"Forgive me! Ah! I see I have pained you," cried Eleanor. "I dare not tell you all."

"Tell me—tell me!" cried Dennis. "Tell me at once!"

"I cannot tell you what they were saying, Dennis, I could not hear, but Hilda was crying and Gerald was kissing her and trying to comfort her—for the old man's death, I daresay, you know."

Dennis laughed bitterly. The demon of jealousy was thoroughly roused within him, and he put the worst construction possible on Gerald's return and the meeting Eleanor had described.

"Did you—did you hear nothing of what they said?" he asked again. "Tell me, Eleanor. If you knew, if you could imagine what I suffer when—if I imagine that Hilda is deceiving me, even in the smallest matter," and he took her hand imploringly.

"Deceiving you!" cried Eleanor, as if the words were dragged from her by a sudden impulse she could not resist. "Deceiving you! Oh, Dennis, Dennis, I fear you are deceived in her, indeed. Forgive me. I did overhear much, much that I would have given worlds not to have heard; but—but—you must judge for yourself, Dennis, for they are to meet again to-night."

"To-night?" replied Dennis, hoarsely.

"When? Where?"

"At nine, in the orchard, by the gate where I saw them yesterday," she answered.

And for a few moments they stood silently side by side, Dennis with flushing cheeks and heaving chest, and features working with suppressed passion.

"Dennis," she said, after a few moments, in low, tender tones. "Dennis, do you hate me for what I have told you?"

"Hate you, Eleanor? No, no. If it is true I will thank you and bless you to the last day of my life for having told me," he answered.

"You do not know," she continued, her voice trembling a little, "what it has cost me to tell you this. Nothing but—nothing but—the feelings—the deep friendship I have for you, Dennis, would have induced me to speak out, but I know your nature is too noble to allow you to

imagine I was actuated by any other motive than a sincere desire for your good. I cannot bear to see a noble, trustful man like you deceived," and her voice faltered.

"You were right to speak, perfectly right," he groaned. "I thank you for your friendship. All this is a blow, a terrible blow to me, and—and if it is as I think," and he raised his face, distorted with passion, and looked up to Heaven, "either he or I will die."

"No, no," cried Eleanor, starting and seizing Dennis by the arm, "don't say that, Dennis Vanstone; if you say that you will kill me. No violence, Dennis, or I will go to Hilda now and tell her all. I could not bear it; the thought of it would kill me," and she wept and sobbed hysterically.

"Why, Eleanor," he cried, roused by the violence of her grief, "what then is a man to do who finds himself tricked and deceived? Tell me that!"

But she only sobbed and trembled the more.

"I could not bear it. Dennis, if you were hurt, if you were killed, maybe—Oh, spare me, for—for—"

And she sank half fainting into his arms. He soothed and quieted her as best he could.

"Never fear, Eleanor," he said. "In your presence, at any rate, there shall be no disturbance. I can keep my temper, and my own counsel too. Are you better now? If so, I'll be going."

"Back to Stoneyvale, Dennis? Back to Stoneyvale?" she asked, imploringly.

"No, Eleanor. I'll be at the orchard gate at nine o'clock, and I'll see and hear for myself to-night," he said.

"Then if you go, I'll go too," she replied, firmly. "I'll not leave you, Dennis Vanstone."

"Come on then, Eleanor. You're a brave girl and true, I'll be bound," he answered.

And away he strode with fierce, angry footsteps, Eleanor following him, and soon they stood, beside the gateway of the orchard concealed by the hedge and overhanging bushes from the sight of passers by.

Dennis stood stern and still, watching with bent brow and eager eyes for the appearance of Hilda and Gerald, whilst Eleanor shivered and trembled beside him.

The moon now suddenly emerged from behind a bank of white clouds, and shone brightly down, and in the distance, beneath the apple trees, appeared a figure which they speedily recognised as being Hilda's.

She walked slowly to and fro under the trees, stopping now and then as if to listen, and in a moment more the tall figure of Gerald Ray leaped the hedge, and Hilda, with an exclamation of joy, advanced towards him with outstretched hands, and in a moment more she was pressed to his heart in a close embrace.

Eleanor felt a convulsive shiver run through Dennis Vanstone's frame as he watched them.

"My God!" he muttered, "it is true then, all true."

And he was about to make a movement to leave the place when Eleanor laid her hand on his arm and a finger on her lips to prevent him.

They were approaching the spot where they stood, and the tones of their voices, their words almost were audible. In an instant more they would be well within earshot.

How sweet and pure and happy looked Hilda as the clear moonbeams fell on her uplifted face! Could such a countenance be but the mask of a deceitful heart? Could it be all a beautiful lie? And Gerald, too, with his bold, frank brow, was he too a false deceiver?

As Dennis looked on them as they walked slowly down the path together this thought for a moment passed through his mind, and then, with a groan of despair, was dismissed again.

"I thought you were never coming, Gerald," were the first words that reached his ear. "I have been waiting for you such a long time. I quite expected Dennis to arrive before you came."

"I was detained, dear. I could not get away sooner. How delightful to see you again, Hilda."

And then they turned, and for a minute or two their words were inaudible.

"You love me still, Hilda?" were the words that next fell on Dennis's tortured ear, as, after a few minutes, their steps brought them again near the gate. "Even after all that has happened you can forgive me, and love me still, Hilda?"

"Yes, yes, as I promised, Gerald. I promised to love you, and I will never go from my word. My dear father—"

And here their voices died away again and were lost in the rustling of the branches above their heads.

Dennis shivered with agony as he gazed and listened, and he laid his hand heavily on Eleanor's shoulder.

"The traitress!" he murmured, "the traitress!"

In a few moments they turned again in the direction of the listeners, and then stopped for a while beneath the shadow of the old yew tree, conversing in low tones together, and the minutes appeared hours to Dennis ere they resumed their walk and approached the gate again.

"I must go now, Hilda," said Gerald, after they had taken a few more turns. "Good bye, my darling girl, if—"

and here his voice sank and they could not catch his words, but in a moment he continued, in a lower voice, "I will come again to-morrow evening. Nay, don't cry, Hilda. I shall be home again very soon, and we shall be happy. Kiss me, dear, and say 'Good bye.'"

And Hilda flung her arms around his neck and bursting into tears kissed him affectionately.

"Oh! Gerald, it is so sad to part with you," she cried. "I cannot be happy without you. Don't forget me when you are far away," and again their voices were lost in the distance.

There was one more farewell kiss exchanged between them, and then Gerald Ray disappeared, and they watched Hilda till her white robes passed through the garden gate and she was lost to sight.

A deep sigh broke from Eleanor Merton as she looked across the now deserted orchard, and Dennis stood still and silent in the same position in which he had stood immovable during the whole scene, without uttering a sound—his eyes fixed on the path through the orchard as if he still saw the forms of Hilda and Gerald before him.

At length Eleanor raised her hand and laid it on his arm.

"Dennis," she whispered, "Dennis Vanstone, speak. What is it? Are you ill?"

Dennis started and shuddered violently, he had forgotten Eleanor's presence, and her touch brought her back to his remembrance.

"You here," he said, at last. "I thought it was Hilda. My God! what have I seen? Where am I? Ah! I remember it all now, it was her whom I saw with Gerald Ray—the false, fair deceiver," and drawing his hand across his eyes like one just aroused from a dream he staggered into the road.

Eleanor followed him.

A moment he stood there, his eyes raised to Heaven, and his face working strangely, then he burst into a harsh fit of laughter, and throwing his arm round Eleanor Merton drew her to him and covered her face with kisses.

"What a fool I have been," he cried, in a strange, excited voice. "What a blind idiot to love her whilst you were at hand. I must have been daft. Let's think no more about the false witch with her pale face and blue eyes. You are worth a dozen of her, Eleanor," and he kissed her again.

"Dennis, Dennis," she whispered, half frightened at his vehemence, and yet her heart beating with a triumphant joy she could not repress at the success of her plot. "Dennis, be calm."

"Calm! Ha, ha! How can that be? Your eyes have bewitched me, sweetheart. Calm! Say you will be my wife, Eleanor. I swear to

you I have no love left for her. Nay, I don't believe I ever loved her. Say you will be my wife. Come away with me now at once—Stoneyvale is ready for its mistress, and that mistress shall be none but you, Eleanor Merton. Speak! Tell me you love me, that you will be mine;" and he seized her arm almost roughly and peered into her face with his fierce, bloodshot eyes all ablaze, his white lips firmly set.

"Let me go, Dennis," she whispered, yet without struggling to release herself. "You are beside yourself, you don't know what you are saying or doing."

"Don't I?" he replied, more quietly, almost sternly in fact. "I know well enough, lass. Listen. I'll tell you what has happened, and if I'm wrong, why, you can set me right. Come here," and he pulled her towards him and sat down on a great stone beside her on the roadside. This is what has happened, lass. I loved a white witch there, who has befuddled me all this while and cares no more for me than for yonder moon, and I have found her out. I have found too that I am loved by a bonnie nut-brown maid, and that I love her in return now that the white witch's spell is broken. Ha, ha! Is it not so, child? Am I not right?"

"I love you," replied Eleanor, in a low tone, "but—"

"That's right, lass, bravo, you're a brave girl—a brave girl. You will be my wife then?" he cried, eagerly.

"Yes, yes," murmured Eleanor. "I will marry you, Dennis Vanstone, if you really wish it, but—"

"Wish it! I do wish it, it is my one desire, and marry me at once, Eleanor," he replied.

"At once! But how?" she asked.

"Easily enough, lass," he answered, with a laugh. "My wedding-day was fixed for ten days hence. Well, it shall be three days hence instead, in London instead of at Hartford. I'll bring my pretty bride home from town on Thursday week and Stoneyvale shall receive a mistress on the appointed day. Ha, ha! Won't folks stare, Eleanor?" and he laughed again wildly.

"Are you in earnest?" she murmured, even her determined spirit quailing before his wild words.

"In earnest!" he rejoined. "Yes, I swear it, Eleanor. You shall be my wife and no one else. Meet me to-morrow morning at Garford Wood, Eleanor, and we will be off to town and made man and wife ere twenty-four hours are over. You ain't afraid, Eleanor, are you? I'll take care of you, lass. Come, promise."

For a moment Eleanor wavered, for a moment a mortal terror struck through her, and she felt chill with dread. Then the sounds of Gerald's tender tones as he spoke to Hilda came back to her, her hatred and jealousy got the upper hand of her, visions of Stoneyvale floated before her eyes, and the despair of Hilda when the news of their marriage should reach her, and in a firm voice she replied:

"I will."

"Brave lass!" he cried, approvingly, rising from the stone on which they were sitting. "Come along, my pretty bride, I'll see you to your home to-night for the last time. Meet me to-morrow at Garford Wood at eight o'clock, and next day you shall be my wife. Come on now, it's late, we must be going, for there's much to be done."

And drawing Eleanor's hand through his arm he walked quickly away from the spot towards Hartford, and at the door of the cottage he bade her good night and kissed her again as he had done at the gate of the orchard.

"Eight o'clock to-morrow morning remember, lass," he muttered.

"Never fear," she replied, "I shan't forget."

And she softly entered the cottage as she had done the night before and crept up to bed, her bosom filled with a strange tumult of feelings, in which love and hate, fear, triumph, jealousy and revenge were mingled. And Dennis, his brain in a whirl, his heart hard and revengeful, wandered about the green lanes, aimlessly, pondering over his wild schemes of vengeance till towards midnight he found himself at the gates of Stoneyvale, and with a trembling,

unsteady hand turned the handle of the great door and entered the old hall.

A little note from Hilda lay on the table. His eye rested on it, and with a fierce exclamation he seized it and tore it into fragments and trampled them under his feet, and then in agony of spirit he groaned aloud.

"I loved her, I loved her so! Why has she deceived me?"

And there till the grey dawn appeared he sat, thinking over what he had seen and heard, and over what was before him, and then for a while sank into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

Wild visions passed through his brain as he slumbered. Hilda's voice as she spoke words of love and kindness to Gerald seemed to whisper beside his pillow. Then came the feeling that it was not, could not be real, that it was only a dream, that the whole scene in the farm orchard was but the work of a disordered imagination.

No, Hilda was still his own, his promised wife, and then with a start he awoke and looked around him, and with a sickening feeling of misery realised that it was all true, that the scene in the orchard was in truth a terrible reality, that Hilda had deceived him, that he had given her up, and that he was pledged to marry another.

As he passed into the hall the fragments of Hilda's note still lying on the ground caught his eye. For a moment he stopped and stooped to pick them up. He had never read the little note. Might it not have contained an explanation—something that would have thrown a light on the strange scene he had witnessed the evening before?

And he stooped to pick up the fragments with a momentary gleam of hope on his face. Then he stopped suddenly, threw the pieces down again without looking at them, and Susan, entering at the moment with her dust-pan, swept them away and consigned them to the flames, which speedily reduced them to ashes, and with them perished Dennis Vanstone's chances of happiness in the years to come.

Ah! had he but read the tender lines she had penned to him the day before, what a change would not his feelings have undergone? How in a moment he would have perceived the snare into which he had fallen, and returned to his darling and fallen at her feet begging her to forgive his injustice and hard thoughts. But it was not to be, and with a fierce, sullen brow he walked across the hall and out into the stable yard to order his dog-cart.

"Don't wait up for me to-night, Mrs. Green," he cried. "I may be detained at Garford; there's plenty of business doing there just now."

"And aren't you going to Ray Farm, sir, first?" inquired Mrs. Green, in surprise. "Miss Hilda will—"

"Oh, that's all right, dame, Miss Hilda and I understand each other," he replied, in an odd tone. "Just pack this portmanteau for me, I may be detained as I said."

"Very well, sir," answered the housekeeper, in surprise, looking at his sullen, bloodshot eyes and pale cheeks, and wondering what could be amiss. "Is there anything else I can do, sir? The workmen about the greenhouse will be here, sir, in half an hour."

"Let them go on as usual. I can't be bothered about them just now," he replied, hastily.

And hearing the wheels of the dog-cart on the gravel before the front door he took up the portmanteau and descended hastily with it to the hall.

"Well," thought Mrs. Green, as she looked after him in dismay, "what's come over the master to-day, I wonder? He's sharp-tempered I know, is Mr. Dennis, but I've seldom seen him look so black as this. If it were possible I should say he had been quarrelling with Miss Hilda, but that's just out of the question. Who could quarrel with such an angel as she is? Not even Mr. Dennis in his blackest mood for sure. Well, when he gets her here I dare say things will go more smoothly with him, and thank goodness it won't be much longer now."

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE TO HATEED TURNED.

Let the wind howl thro' hawthorn bush,
This morning we must away.

THE morning dawned chilly and threatening, clouds flew swiftly over the sky, and the wind piped shrilly amidst the branches and round the chimneys and gables of the cottage as Eleanor looked out of her window at which the still half-bare vine branches tapped and rustled. The cold, grey morning seemed to damp even her spirits and create a feeling of uneasiness and distrust in her bold heart.

It was but six o'clock. At eight she was to meet Dennis Vanstone at Garford Wood, so she had plenty of time before her to make her preparations, and she sat for awhile on the side of her bed meditating.

Everything had gone well with her plans, circumstances had played into her hands in a manner she could hardly have hoped for. She had gained her object, and yet although her heart was filled with a vindictive joy it would hardly be correct to say that she felt content. No, deep down below the surface lay a feeling of dread and anxiety, a terror of what might come in the future when Dennis would find out, as he inevitably would, that she had deceived him, or that he had deceived himself, and that Hilda was blameless.

Then she thought of Gerald. Did she love him still or hate him? To one of her changeable, impetuous temper there was but a step from love to hate. Had she taken it? She half believed for a few moments that she had, and then a sudden, wild terror that shot through her heart undeceived her, the thought crossed her mind that if Dennis married her there would be nothing to prevent Gerald's returning and making Hilda his wife, and for a moment the thought almost caused her to give up the idea of flight, and she let the valise she was packing fall from her hand and sank trembling into a chair. Then her fears quieted again.

"Hilda doesn't care for him, she would not marry him; she loves Dennis, the fool! No, Gerald would never persuade her to marry him, and I—I would prevent the match somehow if he did."

And she laughed spitefully and returned to her preparations with redoubled energy.

Soon her packing was completed, and she stole softly downstairs in the early morning light, and amidst a heavy shower of rain left the house and walked swiftly across the fields leading to Garford Wood.

The country was silent and deserted; the labourers were not yet afield; the inhabitants of the few cottages she passed were not yet astir, and it was with surprise she heard foot-steps advancing towards her at a sharp pace.

She waited for a moment, half inclined to turn away into a neighbouring field to avoid the early traveller, but it was too late. The person, whoever it might be, was close to her, and in a moment more she beheld Gerald Ray in the road before her.

"Good morning, Miss Merton," he said, holding out his hand to her. "You are out early. What! going a journey? You will have rather a bad day for your expedition, I fear."

The sight of Gerald Ray and the tones of his voice sent a strange thrill through the girl's heart.

"Where have you been all these months, Gerald?" she said, her cheeks flushing, and a strange, soft light coming into her eyes. "We have missed you sadly in Hartford. You left so suddenly, without saying good bye even to your best friends."

And she looked at him reproachfully.

"It was kind of you to miss me, Eleanor, but you always were kind to me, I remember. I was more sorry to leave Hartford than you imagine, perhaps. My poor old uncle, how little I thought I was saying good bye to him for ever."

And he sighed.

"And Hilda? you were sorry to leave her too, I suppose?" said Eleanor, jealously.

"Yes, Hilda too. I was grieved to part with her. She missed me, I daresay, at first, in spite of Dennis," he replied.

"There were others who missed you more than she did, Gerald, I fancy," said the girl again, her pale face flushing crimson; and then she added, in a low voice, and half aside: "I for one."

"You missed me, Eleanor? Strange girl! But why?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Why?" cried Eleanor, hotly. "Why! Can't you see? Can't you guess?"

The young man looked at her in astonishment, not a glimmering of what she intended him to understand yet reaching him.

"We were often together, Eleanor, I know, but I don't think I was ever of much service to you, so why you should have missed me so much I can't say; but it was kind of you. It is pleasant to know one's friends have thought of one during one's absence," he replied, lightly.

"Thought of you! Ah! when have you been out of my thoughts? Oh, Gerald, Gerald, you won't understand," she muttered.

"What am I to understand?" said Gerald, surprised and perplexed by her manner, accustomed as he was to her strange moods.

But Eleanor was silent, and turned away her blushing face bashfully, and her eyes sought the ground.

"Well, then, I must remain ignorant if you will not reply," he said, with a laugh.

She raised her head.

"Must I speak, must I lower myself and speak out?" she said, in a low, faltering tone.

Then suddenly turning on him, whilst her big eyes flashed and blazed, and stamping impatiently, she laid her hand on his arm.

"Nay, Eleanor, do not speak, do not tell me why if you don't wish it," he said, soothingly.

"What is it? Have I offended you?" he asked, taking her hand.

She withdrew hers almost roughly, and the tears stood in her eyes. Then she took his hand again, her manner changing to one of caressing tenderness, and laid her lips on it.

"Gerald Ray," she said, "can you not see—I must speak, must tell my love—cannot you see how I love you? Why, your sudden flight almost broke my heart."

Gerald started back and turned deadly pale.

"Hush! hush! for God's sake don't say such words, Eleanor, and, above all, not to me!" he said.

"And why not to you? To whom else can I or shall I ever say them?" cried the girl, recklessly.

"Take me or leave me, Gerald Ray, I love you, and you only, and shall never love another!"

And she stood erect before him, blushing and panting, her glorious eyes glowing and sparkling like diamonds.

But Gerald uttered no word.

"Speak to me! tell me—that—that I have not made my confession in vain," she continued, imploringly, laying her hand on his arm once more.

But he shook it off, though gently.

"Stop, Eleanor, don't say a word more," he replied, quietly, almost sternly. "I was totally unprepared for this. Don't say a word more, for—I am married, Eleanor."

She covered her face with her hands and leant almost helplessly against the gate.

"Married!" she repeated, looking up at him with bloodless lips, and a face out of which every particle of colour had faded. "Married—to Hilda?"

"To Hilda! Good Heavens! what are you thinking of, Eleanor Merton? Hilda is to be married next month to Dennis Vanstone; you know as well as I do," he cried.

"Not to Hilda? not to Hilda? Then who to?" she demanded, hoarsely.

"I married Maggie Donovan a year ago," he replied, quietly.

She started up with a shrill scream of laughter.

"Maggie Donovan? Maggie Donovan, the shepherd's daughter? Ha! ha! ha! A likely story, Gerald Ray."

And she looked at him scornfully.

He coloured angrily.

"Yes; believe it or not as you like, Eleanor Merton, I married Maggie Donovan before I went to Australia a year ago."

She looked at him incredulously.

"And I loved you," she said, in a low tone of contempt. "You preferred a labourer's daughter to me. I thought you loved Hilda Ray, and I hated her for it—ay, and I do hate her still—and now I hate you too, Gerald Ray. Farewell, go to your low wife, and be happy if you can; my curse goes with you."

And with another shrill burst of laughter, and crying "Maggie, the shepherd's daughter!" she left him, and sped rapidly on to Garford Wood, leaving him overcome with surprise and indignation.

Had she been laughing at him all the time? Was her confession of love all a mockery, a ruse to draw from him an avowal of his marriage, which as yet he had confessed to no one but Hilda?

He could not tell, and half angrily, half pityingly, he watched her lithe figure as it sped along the deep green lane till it was out of sight, and then resumed his way with hurried steps.

Eleanor hastened towards the wood, her heart burning with anger and mortification. If Gerald had given her one atom of encouragement, one hope that her love would be returned, she would have thrown up her desperate game with Dennis Vanstone and made straight the misunderstanding between him and Hilda. But now Gerald had told her he was married, and all hope was gone.

She would play out her perilous game to the end. Come what might she would at any rate be mistress of Stoneyvale, and that thought, even in the midst of the tumult raging in her heart, was a cheering and comforting one to her. Money and position she coveted, not for their own sakes perhaps, but for the power they conferred.

Eleanor had many enemies, and indulged in many petty quarrels, and as mistress of Stoneyvale she would be able to set her foot on the necks of many a one who in the days of her poverty (for she was poor) had treated her with scant courtesy, and this alone made a marriage with Dennis very desirable in her eyes.

But Maggie Donovan to be preferred before her!

Maggie, with whom she would have disdained to be seen speaking, whom she had always treated as an inferior and considered so much below her, that was what she felt most deeply—to think of her as the wife of Gerald, the only man who had ever touched her heart, drove her to madness, and the news of his marriage stifled the last glimmering of better feeling still left in her heart.

On she hastened with rapid feet through the narrow lane and up the steep hill beyond till she saw in the deep hollow below her Garford Wood, and listened ere she descended for the sounds of wheels.

All was still, and at a slower pace she walked down the hill and seated herself on a fallen milestone beside the road at its foot beneath the shelter of the great pine trees, and waited with a clouded brow and a sore, angry heart for the coming of her future lord and master.

The rain fell in a thick, misty shower, and the hedges and grass were dank and dripping as she drew her cloak around her, and shivered as the wind moaned and creaked amongst the tall pines and whispered and sighed through the rustling leaves of the oaks and elms above her. It was a dreary, bitter morning enough for an April one, and the grey clouds lay heavily on the tops of the green downs.

What if Dennis Vanstone did not come? What if Hilda had met him and explained the real state of affairs and that they had become reconciled?

Suppose Hilda had told him of Gerald's marriage, a secret which Eleanor did not doubt for a moment he had confided to his cousin. Suppose he should not come—what then?

And her face grew stern and pale, and her little hands were clenched together convulsively

at the thought, and she rose and paced restlessly to and fro whilst the wind moaned and whistled around her and dashed the raindrops against her in blinding showers.

At length, after many moments of weary walking, the sounds of distant wheels fell on her ear, and her heart beat fast as she sat listening eagerly—it was he no doubt; but no, to her dismay she beheld the new shepherd at Ray Farm and a child in the dog-cart coming at a quick pace down the road.

She tried to assume an air of indifference as the man drove up and looked at her curiously, and then, to her annoyance, stopped and addressed her.

"Can I give ye a lift, miss?" he said, touching his hat. "I'm going as far as Eastley Down."

"No, thank you, Jackson, I'm not going your way," she replied. "How are they at the farm?"

"All well, miss. Making preparations for the wedding, miss, so we are all busy," and he drove off with a cheery "Good-day."

Eleanor laughed scornfully as he drove away.

"The wedding! The wedding will be sooner than they think for, I reckon."

And she resumed her restless walk up and down the road beneath the trees till again she heard the roll of wheels, and this time Dennis, driving his dog-cart at a furious pace, could be seen descending the hill, and in a minute more he pulled up the panting, splashed horse beside her.

"I have made you wait, I fear. You're a brave girl, Eleanor. Come, jump up, another half-hour's drive and we shall be at the station. Is this all you've brought?" and he took the little bag from her hand.

"Yes, I had no time to pack more," she answered.

"All the better. Come, give me your hand and jump up," he said; and in another instant she was by his side and the journey to Garford Station resumed.

Dennis looked pale and haggard, his mouth was stern and his dark eyes wild and bloodshot. Scarcely a word passed between him and his intended bride as they drove along the dripping lanes, and even Eleanor could not but feel how cold and constrained his manner towards her was; in fact, Dennis's brain was busy with other thoughts, and Eleanor's presence was forgotten. She was nothing to him save a means of vengeance on Hilda for her supposed unfaithfulness.

Eleanor tried to rouse him from his gloomy reverie, but in vain, and after a few ineffectual efforts to draw him into conversation sank into silence, a silence that remained unbroken till they arrived at the station and took their seats in the train for London.

And long ere the Hartford Downs had been left behind by the fugitives in the hurrying train Gerald Ray had reached Branton and was on board the Rosalind setting sail for Australia and leaving his native land perhaps for several years.

He had bidden a hasty farewell to the farm as he passed, and had seen Hilda waving an adieu to him from the open window, and visited in the early morning down Daniel Ray's grave beneath the churchyard elms. And then scarcely an hour after his meeting with Eleanor he was on board the Rosalind again, and sailing quietly over the smooth green ocean.

(To be Continued.)

It is said that Mr. Harris, of Drury Lane, is likely to engage the Oberammergau performers for the Passion Play for a season in London.

FOURTEEN years ago the first diamond was discovered in South Africa. The exports since then have so increased that in one year nearly three and a half million pounds' worth of diamonds passed through the Cape Post Office, besides diamonds of a very large value which were exported in other ways.

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[TROUBLE FORESHADOWED.]

HER BITTER FOE; OR, A STRUGGLE FOR A HEART.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

*"Lost Through Gold," "Strong Temptation,"**&c., &c.*

CHAPTER XVI.

A LONG-REMEMBERED EVENING.

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory.
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

THERE was another person besides Rosalie Norton who was far from pleased at the understanding which seemed to exist between the heir of Jocelyn and beautiful Ethel Devreux, and this was the most noble the Marquis of Allonby.

Years ago when he was plain Jack Tremaine, the family poor relation, looked down upon by some of his connections on account of his want of prospects, and by the others for his lack of brains, the only kindness he could remember had come to him from Sir Claude, and the happiest days he had known had been spent in the gardens of Devreux Court in company with a blue-eyed fairy five or six years younger than himself.

When they met again times were changed. Jack was a marquis, the best match of the London season, Ethel a young lady awaiting her debut; but just as the child had been a bright spot in the life of the lonely boy, so the simple, innocent unworldliness of the girl charmed the good-natured young fellow, who albeit he was far from clever had quite sense enough to know

most of his friends sought him for what he had, not for what he was.

To Jack Tremaine Ethel seemed the best and purest creature he had ever met, and he straightway fell in love with her, and though he never collected his courage sufficiently to tell her so, his one hope was that some day she would become his wife.

He never said a word of his love. He was prudent and waited patiently. The simple, earnest young nobleman was timid and awkward as a schoolgirl in the presence of the woman he loved. He easily obtained from good-natured Lady Jocelyn a general invitation to the house in Cadogan Street, and he came there day after day with his question hovering on his lips and went away again with it unspoken.

The earl and countess never suspected his secret. Lord and Lady Jocelyn looked upon Lord Allonby's affection for Ethel as a brotherly attachment, the result of their intimacy long ago. They welcomed him kindly, but they never guessed for whose sake he came so often. If Lady Jocelyn ever fancied the house in Cadogan Street held a special charm for Jack she thought that charm lay in Maude, her own brown-haired girl.

And Maude Jocelyn loved the young nobleman with all her heart, even while she sometimes feared that his affection was given to Ethel. Before she was aware of her own secret the mischief was done, and with Maude to love once was to love for ever.

No one suspected it. She was a true Jocelyn and guarded her secret jealously. Besides, Jack Tremaine was not a fascinating man. That the careless, good-tempered young giant, who seemed to suffer so much from the length of his legs and arms, should be loved for his own sake by such an attractive girl as Lord Jocelyn's younger daughter never entered men's minds.

Jack himself suspected it least of all. He was very fond of Maude too, but in a manner as different to her love for him as night to day. He liked to talk to her as he never had courage to talk to Ethel about his home and his plans.

Maude had heard all about the fair estate that had so unexpectedly come to him. She knew the exact number of his dogs and horses, and had even learned their names. She was Jack's great resource when unkind fate separated him from Ethel. He little guessed the pain he might be inflicting upon his patient listener. It was the evening after Miss Carlisle's wedding. Lord Allonby had dined by special invitation in Cadogan Street, but he had not exchanged a single word with Ethel, and he felt himself a highly injured member of society. Once arrived in the drawing-room, finding Miss Devreux perfectly inaccessible, he had settled himself by Maude, and under cover of the music kept up a very private conversation with her.

"Stupid affair, that wedding, Miss Jocelyn. I never remember a thing dragging so."

"I thought it went off famously," dissented Maude.

"Is your brother going to stay in England?" suddenly.

Keith was the only rival he feared, and after what he had seen that day he began to wish very seriously that Mr. Jocelyn had never returned to civilised society.

"We hope so."

"He was away a long time?"

"Four or five years. All the more reason he should remain at home now. We can't spare him again for such a time."

"Has he known Ethel long?"

"As long as you have I should fancy."

The marquis cast a regretful glance to the piano, where Keith stood leaning over Ethel as she sang.

"It's very hard," he returned, absently, not thinking in the least of what he was saying.

Maude knew then, if she had ever doubted, that his love was not hers, but her friend's. She was very loyal. She never gave Ethel an unkind thought for the unconscious injury she had done her.

"You have guessed then who will keep Keith in England?" said the girl, after a long pause.

"Papa and mamma are delighted. I hope Sir Claude will not object."

Poor Lord Allonby sighed as he answered, by a question.

"Is it quite settled, Miss Jocelyn?"

"So far settled that they are only waiting for Sir Claude's consent for the engagement to be publicly announced."

"I daresay he won't give it."

He spoke on the spur of the moment, because he could not bear that all things should go so prosperously with his rival, but his words awoke a strange doubt in Maude's heart. Was it possible after all that the baronet would refuse his consent? They had all looked on it as a matter of course that he should graciously accept Keith as a son-in-law. What if he refused?

"What makes you say so?"

"Nothing," thus suddenly brought to book. "Only I have always heard that Sir Claude always did the thing people least expected. He delights in giving surprises."

"He can hardly refuse," said Ethel, more positively than she felt. "He told mamma he was not ambitious for Ethel, so that she married a gentleman, and Keith is that," proudly.

"He is awfully handsome," regretfully. "Miss Jocelyn, do you suppose it is knocking about Europe by one's self for a good many years that gives a man such a look?"

Maude smiled; she could not help it. Judging from the eagerness with which Jack awaited her reply, had she said "Yes" he would there and then have started off on a prolonged tour through all the most solitary routes he could think of.

"I always admired your brother, but I never thought of this."

"Didn't you?" It seems very natural to me. Who could see Ethel constantly and not love her?"

"But I always thought he loved someone else."

"Poor Keith. Everyone seems to have been busy with his love affairs."

"You don't ask who."

"I can guess."

"She is very beautiful," slowly. "I daresay you've guessed right. I meant your friend, Miss Norton, but somehow or other her face always frightens me. It is so cruel."

"How can you say so?"

"I wouldn't say it to anyone but you, but you never laugh at a fellow's queer ideas. I've often thought her face has just that kind of beauty there is about a snake's."

Maude shivered.

"Please don't say such dreadful things, Lord Allonby. You make my blood run cold."

"But it's true," persisted Jack. "You can't fancy Miss Norton coming to you in sorrow or trouble. I should say she had no heart for anyone except herself."

"You certainly are not in a gallant mood this evening, Lord Allonby."

The poor fellow looked absently at Keith and Ethel, then he replied, reproachfully:

"How can I with that under my eyes? I think I shall go home, Miss Jocelyn; I can't stand it just yet. I daresay I'll get used to it in time. Don't tell anyone, and don't laugh at me for being such a fool as to think I had any chance against your brother."

Then, almost crushing Maude's soft fingers in his own, the young marquis rose, and quickly threading his way among the guests, took his departure; and as he drove home to his lonely splendour there was not a more wretched man in London than John, Marquis of Allonby.

Do what she would Maude Jocelyn could not shake off the strange depression caused by his words. She had rejoiced unfeignedly at Keith's engagement one short day before, but now already she had learned that that engagement had brought great suffering to two hearts.

She could not be deceived by Rosalie's perfect self-possession any more than by poor Jack's attempt at bearing up. She knew quite well that Keith and Ethel could only be happy at the expense of great suffering to the other two.

Whatever happened, they could not all be happy. Maude, as she sat on alone after Jack had left her, fell to wondering which would be the favoured pair, Keith and his betrothed, or the two whose love now seemed hopeless—the Marquis of Allonby and Rosalie Norton.

"What is the matter?" asked Ethel, as she came into her friend's room for a last good night.

"Nothing," evasively.

"There must be something; your eyes are red. Has anyone been vexing you, darling?"

"No one," with an attempt at a smile.

"Someone has been complaining of your hard-heartedness though, and I have been trying to administer comfort."

"Jack?"

"Lord Allonby."

Ethel's face softened strangely. It seemed as if her deep happiness had made her more pitiful for others' pain.

"It is better so, dear," kissing her hand. "Even if I had never met Keith I am sure Jack and I should never have been happy."

"Yet you would have married him," with just a suspicion of reproach in her voice.

"Yes," said Ethel, in a strangely confident tone. "I think, Maude, if I had not loved anyone else I should have married Jack, because—"

"Because," repeated Maude, seeing she broke off suddenly. "Why won't you trust me?"

"Because I should have felt so safe," whispered Ethel. "I could have trusted Jack so thoroughly. Nothing would have made me jealous of him."

Something in her voice puzzled Maude; it was so very near to tears.

"But you trust my brother, dear?"

"Yes. But, Maude, I am just the least bit afraid, you know. Keith is so fascinating, and so many years older than I am, I can't help fearing he must have seen someone a great deal better than I am."

Maude fairly laughed.

"You are the most unreasonable child I ever met, and the most foolish. If Keith had seen anyone he preferred to you he would naturally have proposed to her. He has chosen you from among all others, and I think in return you ought to trust him."

"I do," remorsefully, "I do. Only when I see him talking to Rosalie Norton it gives me a pain here," and she pressed her hand to her chest. "I can't help it, Maude, it feels like a sharp knife stabbing me there."

"Well, when you are married, and know that no one in the world, not even your terror, Miss Norton, can rob you of Keith, perhaps you will be more reasonable."

"Don't be angry with me, Maude."

"I am not angry."

"You think me unreasonable?"

"Just a little."

"I can't make myself like people, Maude."

"But you can help being rude to them. The way you treated Miss Norton to-day was enough to make anyone angry with you."

"I don't like her, Maude."

"But at least you can treat her as a lady. I tell you, Ethel, if she had been the dirt beneath your feet instead of a daughter of one of the oldest families in England you could not have treated her worse than you did to-day."

Ethel took offence; perhaps because the accusation was such a just one. She kissed Maude coldly and left the room.

It was the very first cloud that had ever marred their friendship, and Maude cried herself to sleep. It seemed to her life was very full of trouble just then, and in the morning Ethel still showed herself offended.

She devoted herself to Keith, or, in his absence, kept at Lady Jocelyn's side. There was a visible constraint in her manner when she spoke to Maude, and the latter had hard work to keep cheerful under such trying circumstances.

It was the evening before Keith was to start upon his journey to Devreux Court. They had all been to the opera and returned late. Lady Jocelyn had sent the girls into the old "brown rooms" where Keith had first found them the

night of his return, to have some refreshment. Of course he was in attendance now.

Maude, in her responsibility of chaperone, was afraid to leave the lovers alone, but she sat at a little distance from them and tried hard to devote all her attention to her lobster salad and champagne. How difficult she found this anyone who has ever been placed in similar circumstances will readily understand.

She had never felt so miserable since she could remember. Everything seemed to be at such terrible cross purposes, and everybody too. Her own heart was sore for want of love, and the only love that could have soothed her wound was given to Ethel, who cared nothing for it. As in a dream the lonely girl heard the voices near her. They were so happy. She was so intensely miserable. The three were quite near together in body, in spirit an immense gulf seemed fixed between them. Maude, with her unrequited love, her sad secret of a heart given without return, felt years and years older than the smiling girl who sat on the sofa at Keith's side and played carelessly with the rich late yellow rosebud in his coat.

"I wish you were not going, Keith," said his fair betrothed, nestling the least bit closer to him. "Wouldn't a letter do as well?"

Keith shook his head.

"Don't make it harder for me to leave you, darling. Remember our fate rests really in your father's hands. He could separate us if he chose."

"Could he really?"

"By the law of England until you are twenty-one you cannot be married without Sir Claude's consent."

"But he will give it, Keith?"

"I think so, I hope so; only, dear, you will see that independent of duty it is to our own interest to consult him."

"And you will be back the day after to-morrow?"

"The day after to-morrow. Shall you really miss me just a little, do you think, Ethel?"

"I shall miss you terribly, Keith."

He held her at arm's length and looked with tender pride into the dreamy depths of her violet eyes.

"Whatever happens, Ethel," he cried, hoarsely, "promise me this much that you will be true to me. If I lost you I think I should go mad."

"I shall be true while I live, Keith."

"Even if your father refuse his consent?"

"That makes no difference, Keith. I have given my heart to you; I can't take back the gift even at my father's bidding. While I live, my love, I shall be true to you."

The girl spoke passionately. She came of a race who loved deeply, earnestly, intensely, and her affection for Keith was emphatically the love of her life. No one could have doubted her as she stood there on this summer evening, dressed in virgin white, and, with her hand clasped in her lover's, swore to be true to him for all time.

Neither of the three who sat there ever quite forgot that scene. Its memory stayed with them to their life's end. When bitterest sorrow had divided the lovers Ethel remembered Keith's tenderness with a keenness which was not all pain, and he recalled the touch of her soft, clinging arms and noted that evening as his happiest.

Maude, who was "with them but not of them," often chided her rebellious heart for its wild, longing envy of those two, she little recked then of the trials which lay before them.

"It is getting late," said Miss Jocelyn, at last.

"Ethel, aren't you tired?"

Ethel answered nothing, but Keith interposed quickly.

"Don't hurry, Maude, there's a good child. Remember all day to-morrow I shall be miles away at Devreux Court."

Maude gave way. Hoping that her mother would discover the flight of time and send in search of them she went back to her old seat, and the lovers talked on.

"And it is not three months since I found you here telling your fortunes," said Keith, who

was never tired of recalling that first evening. "I little thought then I had found my wife."

"Your wife?" blushing. "Well, it's what it must come to," he said, gravely, pressing her hand a little tightly. "I hope you don't mean to insist upon a very long engagement, Ethel."

"We ought not to be married for ages," said Miss Devreux, frankly. "In two or three years' time, when I have grown much wiser, then—"

"Nonsense," said Keith, with that touch of authority she loved. "Two or three months perhaps if you insist upon it, but certainly not a year, or even half. We will grow old and wise together, dear."

Miss Ethel did not think fit to answer.

"As soon as I come back from the Court," went on Keith, cheerfully, "we will arrange our wedding. I expect Sir Claude will insist upon your being married from your own home, but if you make me wait till September you must spend all the time till then at Jocelyn Manor."

"Oh! Keith."

"We can't do without you, little one," he said, fondly. "It is not only I who refuse to spare you; my mother looks on you already as her daughter, and nothing will make Maudie happier than discussing the bridesmaids' dresses."

He spoke carelessly, in sheer lightheartedness. Neither he nor Ethel had an idea of the weight of sorrow which lay just then at Maudie's heart.

Ethel answered, simply:

"I don't expect Maudie will officiate herself. She will be too afraid of the old proverb, 'Thrice a bridesmaid, ne'er a bride.'"

"No. I will brave it," cried Maude, chiming in suddenly, and trying hard for her usual calmness. "If you are willing to risk the awful catastrophe of an old maid in the family, Keith, I am."

"As there has not been one for two hundred years I think I'll chance it," he said, lightly.

"Have you the remotest idea of the time, young people?" asked Lady Jocelyn, pleasantly, coming into the room with her watch in her hand, and smiling at Keith and Ethel as some women never cease to smile upon a pair of lovers even after they grow old and grey.

Of course they declared it was not late, but Lady Jocelyn was a martinet when once aroused, and she had come in thoroughly bent upon dispersing the trio in the brown room.

"What is the matter, my dear?" suddenly catching sight of Maude's white, wan face. "My dear child, you are ill!"

"Oh, no, mamma, only a little tired."

"Well, now you must go to bed, and Ethel too," smiling at that young lady. "I expect Keith will be gone before you are down in the morning, so you had better give him your messages for your father now."

But Ethel seemed to have none to give.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOR HER LOVE'S SAKE.

For love is strong as death, and jealousy is as cruel as the grave.

We left Rosalie Norton kneeling at the feet of Sir Claude Devreux imploring him to help her for her mother's sake.

It cost the girl's pride a bitter blow so to kneel, for she hated Ethel Devreux with a bitter, relentless animosity, and she could not forget that the man before her was father of her foe. But revenge was sweet to Rosalie; so that she could separate Keith and Ethel she cared little what means she implored to effect her end.

Sir Claude was startled. His quiet library was little used to such scenes. He knew that a stranger, young and beautiful, was before him imploring his aid, and all the chivalry of his nature was enlisted on her behalf.

Rising with a courtly grace he took Rosalie's hand, and lifting her from the ground placed her in a chair opposite to himself.

"You do me too much honour," said the old baronet, courteously. "Whatever I can do for you rest assured I will do willingly. The Devreuxs never refused to help a woman in their lives. Will you tell me what I can do for you?"

To him, living shut up in his own home, hearing nothing of fashion and its code, forgetting alike the laws of etiquette and those who made them, there seemed nothing peculiar in Rosalie's conduct. She was in trouble, she had come to ask help; that much was natural enough, though Sir Claude certainly felt astonished that she should have journeyed so far to find a champion.

"You loved my mother," said the girl, throwing a world of tenderness into her liquid voice. "It is Rosalie Norton's child who asks your help, Sir Claude."

For an instant the strong man trembled. Years had passed since he had seen his lost love; in their course he had married and lost his wife. His daughter was now a woman grown; yet as Rosalie spoke the years seemed to roll back; their changes too were forgotten. He saw himself as he had been some three-and-twenty years before, young, handsome, popular, and the beautiful Miss Norton's lover.

"You have a look of her," he said, after an earnest scrutiny of Rosalie. "At first I thought there was no resemblance whatever, but I see now I was mistaken. And you are Rosalie Norton's child?"

"Her only child."

"And your father?"

He could not resist the question. For the girl herself he would have done anything, just because of that faint, shadowy resemblance to his early love; but even now he could not bring himself to have dealings with Julius Lester.

"He is dead; he died years ago. Our life was a very hard one, Sir Claude; often and often I have wished for death."

"And you are alone in the world?"

She shook her head.

"After my father's death my mother's family sent for me. My home is with them; my grandfather is all kindness; my aunt tenderness itself. Oh! if it rested with them to make me so I should be happy indeed."

Sir Claude's bewilderment increased. He knew Lord Norton was a man of wealth and power; this girl was his acknowledged heiress. If her noble grandfather could not help her why had she come so many miles to appeal to a perfect stranger?

"I knew Lord Norton well," said the baronet, at length. "I am glad he has relented at last. After all these years it is pleasant to think of Rosalie's child in her rightful home."

"And you will help me?" returning to the point with pitiful earnestness.

Sir Claude hesitated, only for one instant. The mute entreaty of her beautiful eyes touched him keenly.

"If it rests with me to make you happy believe me I will shrink from no exertion. I loved your mother as a man loves but once in life. When she refused me I thought the world a blank. Later on, when news came of her death, for the sake of my name I married, but my wife was never as dear to me as Rosalie. A man loves like that only once."

"And a woman too," said Rosalie, thoughtfully. "Sir Claude, will you keep my secret? Will you listen to my story and help me for my dead mother's sake?"

The baronet bowed his head. He was too moved for many words.

"My father was a poor man," began Rosalie, "and while he lived I had no idea that wealth and prosperity could ever come to me. I led a lonely, neglected life, rarely seeing anyone except the men who came to play cards with my father. From week's end to week's end I lived thus until I lost all hope of change."

"Poor child!"

"Ay, I was unhappy enough, but it was in the midst of this poor, miserable life that my greatest joy came to me. Among the young sons of fashion who came to our lodgings to enjoy the mysteries of whist and écarté there was one different far from all the rest. Mostly

they treated me as something beneath their notice, a creature too lowly for even a kindly word and glance. He was different, Heaven bless him! He taught me to wish to leave the old Bohemian life and seek something better, more womanly. In a word, he taught me to love him. Such love comes, Sir Claude, you yourself have said it, but once in a man's life."

She broke down then, and burst into a fit of the most uncontrollable sobbing. Sir Claude watched her, deeply moved. All his interest and sympathy was aroused. At that moment he would have done anything in the world for his dead love's child.

"Do not distress yourself by continuing. I can guess it all. Lord Norton has separated you from the object of your affections. Dry your eyes, my dear. You shall be married from Devreux Court, and I will give you away myself."

Rosalie shivered in the summer sunshine.

"You have not guessed my sorrow; it goes deeper than that. Thank you a thousand times for your kindness, but you are mistaken. Lord Norton has not crossed my wishes. He does not even know my lover's name. You look surprised," she went on, simply. "I must go back once more to the past to help you understand. I left my father. I went into an English school as pupil-teacher. It was a cruel life to lead, full of slights and humiliations, but I bore it bravely for his sake."

"When I went home to my father's death-bed and heard my true parentage I was glad, but not for my own sake. I only rejoiced that he would not have to stoop to marry a wife below him in rank."

"We never met. While I was still at school he had gone abroad on a long, lonely tour. My grandfather wished me to spend some time in Italy, and I yielded. I would have gone anywhere, done anything, to make myself more worthy of my lover. Alas! in vain."

"You cannot mean that he is dead?"

"He is not dead," her beautiful eyes moist with tears, "but he is dead to me."

"The scoundrel!"

She shook her head.

"You must not blame him. We were never publicly engaged, you know. I daresay he only amused himself by playing with the affections of a little Bohemian. I was not Lord Norton's grand-daughter in those days, you see," bitterly.

"His conduct is shameful, and a disgrace to all honourable men."

"Hush! You of all men must not blame him. Wait until you have heard the end. We met this year. It was my first season. He had just returned from a long tour. We met, and he became my shadow. He had forgotten the gambler's daughter. He thought of me only as Rosalie Norton. But that mattered nothing to me. I did not care under what name he knew me so that he only loved me still."

Sir Claude listened with breathless attention. He could not yet discover of what possible aid he could be to the fair stranger.

"Some people call me pretty," said Rosalie, with a kind of proud humility, "but of course there are many other faces fairer far than mine, and one of them has come between me and happiness. When I thought my years of constancy were to be rewarded, when I looked on him as my own, he saw her, and my happiness was shattered at a blow."

Rosalie wandered from the truth somewhat in this statement, for Keith and Ethel were on intimate terms before she herself was presented to the former, but few persons are more particular in their statements when excited, and Sir Claude was not wise enough in the exact details to be able to contradict her.

"She cannot love him as I do," went on Miss Norton, passionately, her tone full of an intense pathos, "I who have thought of him for years waking and sleeping. She is only a child, a child who knows nothing of such love as mine. She likes him because he is handsome and fascinating, but losing him would only be a trifling

sorrow to her, while it will break my heart if I have to live my life without him."

"There is nothing so contemptible as robbing another woman of her lover," replied Sir Claude.

He was thinking of the time when he had been robbed of his love by Julius Lester, for the elder Rosalie had been almost promised to him when his rival appeared upon the scene. Strangely enough throughout the interview the baronet connected Rosalie with her mother. He never thought of her as the daughter of the man who had been his sworn foe.

"No one knows that I am here," said Rosalie, after a long pause. "I may have done a wild, wicked thing in coming, but I could not help it. If only he lost her, if only he were free from her fascinations, he would come back to me; I know he would. It was my last chance that for my mother's sake you perhaps might help me, and that was why I came."

"But, my dear child," cried Sir Claude, fairly bewildered, "what on earth am I to do? If I called out the man and put a bullet through his head you wouldn't thank me."

"I thought perhaps," her breath went and came painfully in her intense agitation, "perhaps you would refuse your consent. Of course it is asking a great deal," trembling, "but the happiness of my life is at stake."

"But they won't ask my consent," said the baronet, puzzled.

"They must. Your daughter is under age." "My daughter? Do you mean to say that it is my child, Ethel, who has done you this cruel wrong?"

She bowed her head.

"And the man—Forgive me, but if I am to do anything in this I must know his name."

"Keith Jocelyn."

"Keith Jocelyn? So that is why they were always so fond of Ethel? Why, the girl has been like a sister to Maude all her life. I don't suppose Keith would ever have thought of it if he had been left to himself. It's his mother's doing."

"It is her beauty," with a little cry. "Girls with golden hair and violet eyes are made to steal men's hearts away."

A long, long silence. Sir Claude paced up and down the room impatiently. He was more annoyed than he had been for years.

He had never loved Ethel, and it had been an immense relief to him that Lady Jocelyn took her so thoroughly off his hands, but he had never once imagined the possibility of her falling in love with Keith. He did not really mind whom Ethel married, but he would not let her spoil the life of his lost love's child.

He thought of Ethel as he remembered her a cold (to him), uninteresting schoolgirl, and he looked at his present visitor, beautiful as a vision, passion and love shining in her eyes. No, she was right, Ethel could not feel as she did. There would be a little pouting, a few tears perhaps if he crossed Ethel's wilful way, but she would not suffer the bitter heartache, the life-long agony which would come to this lovely Rosalie if Keith Jocelyn were allowed to persist in his folly and for the sake of a passing fancy desert the creature who had waited for him so faithfully. He would not stand by and see the daughter of his lost darling made miserable by child of his.

Rosalie misunderstood his silence.

"I see," she said, sadly, "I have asked too much. I forgot that a father must think of his own child first. I am very sorry that I have troubled you. Forgive me. I do not ask you to keep my secret. You come of a race who would scorn to betray a woman."

She had risen as though to go, but Sir Claude took her hand and put her gently back into her chair.

"Rosalie," he said, gravely, using her name almost unconsciously, "you are mistaken. I cannot let your mother's child owe the misery of her life to my daughter. Ethel is little more than a schoolgirl. She will soon get over the disappointment. Besides, I should not care for her

to marry a man who behaved as Keith Jocelyn has done to you."

A faint colour came back to Rosalie's cheeks. It was the first flush of victory.

"I cannot understand Lord and Lady Jocelyn," went on Sir Claude, angrily. "I trusted my child to their care. Do they think they are fulfilling that trust honourably in letting her engage herself to their son without my consent and knowledge?"

"He is coming to-morrow to tell you and ask for your consent."

"He will find he has come too late," dryly. "I am very much displeased at the whole affair."

"And you will refuse your consent?"

"I shall. Do you think," with a strange pity in his voice, "you will forgive your lover's temporary wandering?"

"I could forgive him anything in the world," she answered, promptly, and with great firmness. "You have made the happiness of my life."

Sir Claude smiled.

"I little thought I was of so much importance as to be able to do that, but I am very glad."

There was one thing she longed to ask, yet dared not. Would Ethel linger in London after her engagement was broken?

Perhaps Sir Claude read the question in her eyes, for he observed:

"I hope you will be very happy, my dear. I am glad to have seen Rosalie's child even on such a painful errand. I think if ever I come to London I must call upon Lord Norton and get him to allow us to improve our acquaintance. I will not ask you to come here. After to-day's errand the place would always have sad associations for you, and besides you would hardly care to meet my daughter."

"And she will come home?"

"Immediately."

Rosalie had to lower her head to hide the triumph shining in her beautiful eyes.

"I do not think you will keep her long," she said, simply. "Mr. Jocelyn had many rivals in her favour. For a long time I thought Lord Altonby would be the conqueror."

"What, that boy, Jack Tremaine?"

"The Marquis of Altonby. He used to be Miss Devreux's shadow."

"I am glad you told me," for his dead wife's face had risen up before his fancy, looking at him reproachfully for sacrificing their child's interests to a stranger's. "I will ask Altonby down at once. He is a good fellow, and I dare say Ethel will be a little dull."

He would fain have prevailed upon his guest to remain and partake of some refreshment, but Rosalie refused. She had come to plead for her love's sake and she did not wish her visit to be talked of in the household, which would perhaps end in Ethel's hearing of it.

She thanked Sir Claude simply, and from her heart she let him press a fatherly kiss upon her forehead. And then without any servant to open the door or attend her departure she passed out through the French windows of the library as suddenly and unexpectedly as she had come.

The baronet thought long and carefully over the interview. Conscience would cry that he had been unjust to his own child.

"I don't see it," reflected the baronet. "If Keith Jocelyn loved Rosalie really his affection for Ethel can be but a passing fancy, and I have saved her from being a neglected wife. If she is truly the object of his choice, and not that beautiful houri who was here just now, why, he will keep true to her and they can be married later on."

Joliffe came in then to announce dinner, and Mrs. Grey, who was awaiting the baronet, thought she had never seen him so absent when he appeared since the first evening of her stay at Devreux Court.

(To be Continued.)

FACETIÆ.

ABSENT OMEN!—Success to the future of New Leadenhall Meat Market! A gentleman bearing the respected name of Whittington officially assisted at the ceremony. The name is unfortunately suggestive of cat's meat. Punch.

RECENT POLICE FAILURE.—At whatever station on the Brighton line he got out he certainly accompanied the police on purpose to Baulk'em. Punch.

THE WORST GENERAL AT PRESENT IN FRANCE.—General Tariff. Punch.

"THE BRONZE HORSE" at the Alhambra sounds heavy. So does "a Led Horse"—but it needn't be. Punch.

UNSOPHISTICATED.

THE DEAN: "Well, I'm glad you're getting on well in your new place, Jemima. When I'm in London I will call and see you."

JEMIMA: "Oh, sir, missus don't allow no lowers!" Punch.

At a social party, where humorous definitions formed one of the games of the evening, the question was put: "What is religion?" "Religion," said one of the party, who had less renown for piety than anything else, "religion is an insurance against fire in the next world, for which honesty is the best policy."

A GUEST at a fashionable hotel took his seat at a dinner table, but no one appearing to wait on him, he remarked: "Have they any waiters at this hotel?" "Yes," responded a wag on the opposite side of the table, "the boarders are the waiters."

FASHIONABLE CIRCLES.—Betting rings. Judy.

STERN DUTY.—Taking the rudder. Judy.

QUERIES BY OUR OWN JAMES.

How can a footman stand six feet in his stockings when he's only got two?

Would not "high-mienal" be a proper term to apply to such a one who contemplated matrimony?

Why is the pedal extremity of an embryonic footman like a note of reference at the bottom of a sheet of type?—Because it's the "foot of a page."

WHAT part of a carriage do auctioneers resemble?—The hammer-cloth. Judy.

HOW IT CAME ABOUT?

SHE: "And so, Mr. Jefferson, you go back to your own country next week. And pray now what would you like to take with you?"

[Upon which he plucked up courage and told her right off, and now she's Mrs. Jefferson, and has gone with him.] Judy.

VERY "LOW FREEBOARD."—Workhouse diet. Judy.

A "PET" OF A FLOWER.—Sweet William. Judy.

BEST TO STRIKE.—Love-matches. Judy.

SOMETHING IN THAT.

The small-pox epidemic, as everybody knows, is terribly bad in London just now. There is, however, one great consolation for those who are so unfortunate as to catch this frightful disease, viz., that the worse they have it the more they will be pitted. Judy.

"MILITARY BALLOONING" is the easiest way of rising in the army. Judy.

ODD.

AMONGST the articles not exhibited at the Railway Appliance Exhibition at the Crystal Palace we missed the following:—A train of thought, a wheel of fortune, a line of business, an engine of war, a tender subject, a succs de steam, an eccentric testator, a signal escape, a university coach, a station in life, a whistle-ing oyster, and the van of progress. Judy.

TEACHER.—"John, what are your boots made of?" Boy.—"Of leather." "Where does the leather come from?" "From the hide of the ox." "What animal, therefore, supplies you with boots and gives you meat to eat?" "My father."

"Do you pretend to have as good judgment as I have?" exclaimed an enraged wife to her husband. "Well, no," he replied, slowly, "our choice of partners for life shows that my judgment is not to be compared with yours."

It's a little paradoxical that a theatre, which is the home of farcical comedy and laughter, should be called the Cry-tear-ion.

Moonshine.

AFTER A REVIEW.

CIVILIAN FRIEND (to Timkins, of the 99th Auxiliaries): "Well, which side beat?" TIMKINS: "We did; all to nothing. Why, the enemy were nowhere."

C. F.: "That's how it was, I s'pose."

Moonshine.

GLASS HOUSES.—Hotels.

Moonshine.

VEILS OF TIERS.—Private box curtains.

Moonshine.

ADVICE TO TELEGRAPH CLERKS.—Wire in.

Moonshine.

SONGS FOR THE NEW FISH SUPPLY COMPANY.

WHAT a nice place to be in.

Old King Cole was a jolly old sole,
Och! St. Patrick was a gentleman, he came
from dace-nt people. Moonshine.

AT HENLEY.

MRS. BROWN (always on the look out for information): "Now, Tom, you must tell us when anybody gets into anybody else's wash. I want to see what 'tis like."

MR. B.: "Don't be silly, Betsy. That only happens in 'tub' practice." Moonshine.

A POLICEMAN tells us that the men who are most fond of their "cups" the soonest become "tumbler." Moonshine.

"WHEEL AND WOE" was the observation of the wanted gentleman who the other day was pursued and captured by a Coventry police officer on a tricycle. Moonshine.

BIRD FANCIERS.—Foxes.

Moonshine.

LIGHT WEIGHTS.—Greyhounds.

Moonshine.

THE LADIES' RACE.—The run of fashion.

Moonshine.

YE GODS!—Why was a Roman lady not a lady? Because she was a he-then!

Moonshine.

THE RANK OF THE CIVIL SERVICE.

(The telegraph clerks, among other things, demand to be placed on the same rank as the Civil Service.)

SHOPKEEPER: "Shall I send it—Miss Brown, I believe?"

TELEGRAPH CLERK (raised to the rank of the Civil Service): "Mary Brown, Esquire!"

Moonshine.

HIGH CHURCH.—Saint Paul's Cathedral.

Moonshine.

THE KING OF TERRORS.—The Czar.

Moonshine.

HIGH ART.—Building castles in the air.

Moonshine.

SONG OF THE FURNITURE-MAKER.—Thou art so near and yet so far. Moonshine.

MOTHER-IN-LAW: "How are the children, Polly?"

MOTHER-IN-FACT: "Polly has the measles, she's at school; Johnny has the scarlatina, he's at school; Jenny has the croup, she's at school. The inspector came for them; they'll all die!"

MOTHER-IN-LAW: "Well, my dear, never mind; a funeral is more respectable than a summons." Moonshine.

THE PRINTS OF WALLS.—A careworn face.

Moonshine.

DEFINITION by a fellow in nubibus.—A rent in a cloud is one that is too high for the tenant. Moonshine.

A YOUNG lady was caressing a pretty spaniel and murmuring: "I do love a nice dog!" "Ah," sighed a dandy standing near, "I would I were a dog." "Never mind," retorted the young lady, sharply, "you'll grow."

"THERE, Henrietta, don't be for ever gazing into the mirror. It looks very bad." "I was thinking, mamma, that it looked very good; and beside, father says I should look on the bright side, including, I suppose, the bright side of a mirror."

"BE ever ready to acknowledge a favour," says a writer. We are, sir; we are. What troubles us is that on one side we are completely loaded down with readiness, while on the other side opportunity is painfully scarce.

DENTISTICAL QUERY.—"Is every man with loose teeth a rattling 'good talker'?" Fun.

EVERY MAN HAS HIS MISSION.

MISS LORNE TENNIS (whose partner has lost the match for her): "Well, Captain Batter, I hope you'll be a little more useful in the next game."

CAPTAIN B.: "Haw—aw—yaas. Useful? Fact is, in our regiment—fellows—aw—wather pwide—themselves—haw—on—er—being—haw—aw—ornamental!" Fun.

WASTE OF BREATH.—Telling an ill-natured woman to keep her temper, as if she were ever likely to get rid of it. Fun.

TERRIBLE AND HEARTLESS CASE OF THEFT.—The ladies who have been seen wearing those abominable crinolines are surely guilty of stealing. Fun.

SCOTCH-IAN MUSIC.—Mowers' melodies.

Fun.

HARD LINES.

COOKING classes are very good in their way, but it isn't pleasant to come home, hungry and tired, and hear that your enthusiastic wife has gone out, taking the cook with her, to have a cookery lesson, and that there is no dinner. Fun.

A MAN WHO IS CONSTANTLY "PUTTING HIS FOOT INTO IT."—A jockey who wears spurs. Fun.

NO FALSE PRIDE.

FIRST NEWS BOY: "Ow are yer gettin' on, Billy? Nigh sold out yet?"

SECOND N. B.: "What business is that o' yours?"

FIRST N. B.: "Oh, I ain't above takin' a interest in the sneakinest an' dirtiest o' critters." Fun.

IN SUSPENSE.

COMETS have from time immemorial been supposed, by nervous and credulous persons at least, to mean something; but of the present one it cannot be said that "thereby hangs a tale," because, as a matter of fact, the tail is up at the top, and thereby hangs the comet. Fun.

RELATIVES are an absolute necessity to some people. If a servant girl hasn't got an aunt who is sick and requires someone to spend the night with her, how is the girl to go to the circus?

A MAGAZINE "ARTICLE."—Gunpowder.

Funny Folks.

THE BOTTLE "IMP."—An imperial pint.

Funny Folks.

THE POSTMAN'S FAREWELL.—"Rat-tat-ta!"

Funny Folks.

THRICE INJURED.

ITALY'S honour has been cut to the quick by the French occupation of Tunis, and she now feels not only doubly, but "Tripoli" aggrieved. Funny Folks.

SUGGESTION FOR A NEW CRICKET MATCH.—Harrow Boys versus Plough Boys.

Funny Folks.

A NEW "MOVE."

"It has been decided to move the Marlborough Street police-court." This architectural feat would seem impossible were we not accustomed to hear of magistrates trying cases of so painfully affecting a character that "the whole court was moved." Funny Folks.

LINK BY LINK.

BY

A POPULAR AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

HALF a million of money!

Do any of us quite comprehend the full meaning of a phrase which may be pronounced so glibly?

It means a fortune, to spend which, no matter how lavishly, will take a lifetime. It means the disbursement of twenty-five thousand pounds per annum, or nearly five hundred pounds per week, without the slightest diminution of one's principal. It means the respect of most men and the cringing adulation of many.

It means immense power for good or evil, almost every luxury that wealth can buy, the amelioration of most sorrows, the heightening of most enjoyments, and one great difficulty—that of entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

To an unmarried woman it means even more than to a man. Let her beauty be faded, her temper soured, her girlhood vanished—let her be illiterate, ill-bred, and entirely destitute of charm, either of mind or person, and she shall nevertheless be besieged by more suitors than would come courting Venus herself, if Venus had not a penny wherewith to bless the lover on whom she might bestow her hand.

But let her be young, fair, accomplished, well-born, and altogether charming, like May Pole-Gell, and to what may she not aspire?

Chandos Knollys asks himself the question, and execrates his own folly in not having "made the running" earlier, when he was philandering after the now insipid charms of Mademoiselle Millefleurs, instead of improving the cordial relations which once existed between himself and the rector's daughter.

Colin Cathcart asks himself the question also, and answers it with a groan of despair. That intangible barrier of family pride was bad enough, looked at from the Rev. Felix's point of view, but this substantial wall of gold is quite impassable.

Colin's friends are growing anxious about him. Somehow Doctor Gwynne's tonics do not strengthen the young man as they ought. Appetite fails him; he is languid, weak, emaciated, looking still as though the clothes he wore before the accident were made for somebody else, so loosely do they hang about his wasted frame.

"We must get him away to the seaside," says the doctor; and Colin listlessly assents.

It is arranged that he and Prometheus Hornblower shall start to-morrow for a Welsh watering-place.

Laura Wiseman has gone back to her duties at the hospital, and this history will know her no more. She is one of those fortunate individuals who have less of romance than of common sense in their composition.

If Colin had married her she would have made him a true and faithful wife; his socks would never have been holey nor his clean shirts buttonless, and his domestic life would have been peaceful above the ordinary lot, even to infinity.

As it is she heaves a sigh or two and draws solid comfort from the reflection that her late patient is evidently in the early stages of con-

sumption, and that it is better to be a disappointed spinster than a disconsolate widow.

Colin has not spoken to Miss Pole-Gell since that Sunday night when, being betrayed into a confession of his love, he made the marvellous discovery that it was returned. He hardly hopes that he will ever speak to her again, for he has almost resolved to shake off the dust of his feet against this little village of Astonburne, never to return.

He would wholly resolve so to do, but resolution implies energy, and it seems to him that he left all his energy, all his strength of body and of mind at the bottom of the lead mine, three months ago.

His thoughts are very full of May Pole-Gell this last afternoon; nay, his thoughts are always full of her, as an opium-smoker's brain is always affected by the fumes of the drug which is sapping his existence; but this afternoon he in his heart is taking the last farewell. It occurs to him that he will say "Good bye" to the place where first they met, as a poor substitute for the leave-taking which is forbidden him.

Is it very wonderful he should find her there, on the very spot where she drove over his prostrate sleeping figure, and broke his arm as a preliminary to the breaking of his heart?

Believe me, between two people who love truly, and whose natures are in such complete accord, each supplying what the other lacks, that they form one complete being in unity of soul, there are subtle spiritual connecting-links of which we know and understand nothing, impulses which work like any other great natural attraction to draw them together.

It is not very strange that at this critical juncture, as he goes to say "Good bye," for her dear sake, to the place where first they met, he should find her seated there upon the velvet moss hard by the belt of fir trees on the sloping hillside.

Her face is buried in her hands. As he draws near, with steps that are inaudible upon the soft turf, he fancies he hears a sob. A sad little figure she looks in those garments of mourning which set him thinking, not of her great pecuniary gain, but of the loss she has sustained.

For the first time it occurs to him that she may have dearly loved the "Uncle John" whose pet she was, and with that he remembers that even five hundred thousand pounds could not console such a girl as he believes May to be for the loss of one she held dear.

Shall he intrude upon her grief? Would it be kinder, wiser, more worthy of the honest, honourable gentleman he would desire, in spite of origin, to prove himself, if he were sternly to repress the craving that has come upon him once more to touch her hand, to look into her sweet face, and to say to her the farewell which shall be for ever?

Whilst he stops and hesitates she turns her head, and the opportunity is lost. She springs to her feet and comes towards him. There are traces of tears upon her cheek, but the pure, pale face wears a look of outraged pride, and her glorious eyes blaze with indignant anger.

"Yes," she cries, "creep away from me and hide yourself. What shameful thing have you done, Colin Cathcart, that when you see me in the distance you turn your eyes and your steps another way? Or of what shameful thing do you suspect me that you venture thus to treat your promised wife?"

He has not a word to say in answer to that reproach. He tries to speak, but no sound issues from his dry lips. He can only look at her in dumb sorrow and despair.

"Have you forgotten?" she continues. "Oh! Colin, my beloved, is it so long since you took me to your arms by the wicket-gate in the soft summer darkness? Have you forgotten what the fountain and the nightingale said to us, and all that we vowed to each other, my dear, dear love?"

"Forgotten!" he repeats, in harsh tones, unlike his own; and with that he is dumb again.

"Let me remind you," says the girl, in that low, sweet voice of hers. "We did not stay long

talking, Colin (at least, the time seemed very short), but we contrived to say a great deal—perhaps that is the reason you have forgotten so quickly. We were to be true and constant, brave in the face of difficulty and opposition, trustful always, let whatever would betide. You were to ask papa to give me to you, Colin—"

"He told you—surely he told you?" interrupts the young man. "I asked and was refused in terms that admitted of no hope."

"And if he could not be brought to see with our eyes at first we were not to be daunted, but to persist until he gave way? Have you come to think the prize so worthless, dear, that after one little struggle you were content to abandon all hope of its possession?"

"You were not an heiress then."

"No; misfortunes never come alone. But, Mr. Cathcart, if I were you, and had retained the slightest particle of affection for a girl I first professed to adore and then deserted, I think the news of her bereavement would have caused a stir amongst the dead ashes of what had once been living flame. I think I would have gone to her in her affliction and have tried to comfort her. I do not believe a few piles of sovereigns would have formed an insurmountable barrier. I imagine that, knowing how priceless was such love as she in her folly had bestowed upon me, I might have refrained from doing her the injustice to suppose—"

"Stop!" cries the young man, abruptly, with a white, drawn face, and quivering lips. "Stop, May! I cannot bear it!"

Then the girl utters a kind of choking cry, which proves that her own composure is not far from giving way. But she lays a hand upon his arm and hurries on excitedly.

"Am I prone to underestimate myself? We Pole-Gells are not accustomed to take the lowest place, Colin, and I am not more humble than my ancestors have been. I confess to you that until we met I thought few men worthy even to touch my hand in friendship, nor was there one in this broad shire by whose preference I could have considered myself honoured save in the conventional sense. Do you think I am less proud now because little by little I have come to set you high above all others, my prince, my king?"

"May, May, May, you break my heart!"

"What is there to come between us? Is it your want of ancestry? I say with Tennyson:

"Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

Is it my father's will? We must be patient, waiting, hoping that he may yield, but if not, 'Whom God hath joined let no man put asunder.' I will come to you, Colin, in the end. Is it Uncle John's wealth? I think so little of it, believe me, that if I could transfer it to you this moment by the laying of my lips on yours I would do so more carelessly than I give you this, and this, and this. It should be yours absolutely, my dearest, to throw it into the sea, or endow an hospital, if you liked; I would be content to become a poor man's wife if the poor man loved me, Colin, as I love you. But because of the fortune that has reverted to me, and because of my advantages of birth, I shame myself by showing you all my heart, in protestations the remembrance of which will kill me if you have indeed changed since the night I promised to be yours."

"Changed!" cries Colin.

And in articulate speech he says no more. There are ways of answering the girl one loves more emphatic and more satisfactory than words. May Pole-Gell, lying in his arms, seems quite content.

"How thin your poor face is!" she cries, brushing his cheek with a soft, caressing touch. "How worn and wasted you are, Colin! I will not scold you any longer for the past."

"I have been punished sufficiently by my own misery," he answers.

"What brought you here to-day? How came you to find me in this lane?"

"I came to say 'good bye' to the spot where first we met, since I dared not hope for another leave-taking."

"Good bye?" she repeats, apprehensively.

"I am going away with Mr. Hornblower to-morrow to the Welsh coast," says Colin, with a smile.

"You shall not go!" cries the girl, imperiously. Then, with a change of key: "Must you go, dear? Does Doctor Gwynne order you change of air?"

"I shall not respect his orders in any case. You are my best physician, May. You have given me new life, my dearest love."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

And there's a last in man no charm can tame
Of loudly publishing our neighbour's shame;
On eagle's wings immortal scandals fly,
While virtuous actions are but born and die.

In the flood of moonlight which falls athwart the floor of the gallery, that pale and slender ghost with streaming hair, for whom Crimp, the valet, has lain in ambush, halts and confronts him.

"Speak not so loud, good Monsieur Edouard, when all the world sleeps," she responds, with composure which increases his rage to the verge of human endurance.

"All the world shall hear!" he cries. "You good-for-nothing, abandoned hussey—"

"Silence!" exclaims the girl, with a superb gesture of scorn, and an impressive lifting of one of her shapely hands, which no tragic actress, however great her "genius histrionique," could have surpassed in dignity. "Waste not breath in the reproaches unworthy and inutile. Of Chandos Knollys, I—Lavinie Knollys—am the wife."

"His wife!" ejaculates the valet.

"I am his wife, during not many weeks. It is whilst miladi rested at Scarborough that we are married, for proof of which I have the dispense of banns (is it not?) attested comme il faut. We have desired, my husband and me, not to irritate Sare Marmaduke by an atonal premature and indiscreet—"

"I shall tell him in the morning," interposes Crimp, spitefully.

"Cela m'est égal," replies the Frenchwoman, with proud equanimity. "Between Monsieur Chandos and me the things have to-night been said which render necessary the immediate recognition of my right. I wish you la bonne nuit."

She sweeps away from the flood of moonlight into the darkness towards her own chamber, a white-robed ghost once more, whose raiment rustles as she glides, and Crimp looks after her open-mouthed until the apparition has disappeared. Then he steals downstairs like a thief in the night to throw himself upon the bed which is made up for him near his master's door; but not to sleep.

It is morning, a morning of accidents, the small mishaps which impair domestic peace more than large misfortunes do.

The baronet's coffee has been brought to him in a lukewarm condition; his eggs have been boiled half a minute longer than his palate approves; the sweetness of his cream is not above suspicion, and worse than all, poor Crimp, whose hand after the sleeplessness of the night is not quite so steady as usual, has contrived to gash Sir Marmaduke's chin severely whilst shaving him.

"The langwidge he used was hawful, simply hawful! I'd just as soon have probed a chained tiger with a rusty nail!" complains the valet to the meek footman; and with that, summoning all his courage, he goes in to tell his master the gallery adventure of the previous night.

"Tell my wife and son and—and Millefleurs to come here immediately," commands the baronet, his bloodshot eyes blazing with passion that is all the more terrible because, marvellous to relate, it does not find vent in customary violence. "And, Crimp, if you venture to make this scandal the talk of the servants'-hall I will—I will murder you."

Whereat Crimp departs, trembling in every limb, and not doubting but Sir Marmaduke will

be as good or as bad as his word. A thankful man is the valet that he has been discreet enough, so far as his fellow-servants are concerned, to look within his own bosom revelations which his tongue has itched to declare.

Of the three people who receive that imperative summons but one is prepared for its purport. Mademoiselle knows what it means and fingers until she sees Chandos and miladi crossing the ball. Then she joins them, and Chandos begins to quake with vague misgivings.

"What is the meaning of this disreputable story Crimp has been telling me?" cries the baronet, glaring at her savagely, and the girl faces him as pale, but also as composed, as death itself.

"Against the word 'disreputable' I protest," she answers. "Sare Marmaduke, I am your son's wife."

"Explain this accursed riddle, sir!—do you hear?" shouts "Sare" Marmaduke, turning to the young man, whilst my lady looks from one to the other, trying vainly to preserve her ordinary hauteur and indifference.

"We went through a form of marriage a few weeks ago whilst my mother was at Scarborough," answers Chandos, sheepishly. "It was only a form."

"How say you 'only a form,' mon mari?" asks the girl. "Sare Marmaduke, we were in the open church, before the witnesses, after proper publication of what you call 'the banns,' and by a curd Protestant properly married, as I possess the proof. Mon dieu, what is it that he will say?"

A pause of triumph on the part of mademoiselle, of consternation on the part of the others; a pause soon broken by a fierce oath from the invalid.

"Chandos, why do you not contradict this French slut?" he demands.

"Halte là!" exclaims the girl, proudly. "I know not parfaitement that which you will say by 'slut,' but I think well it is a word injurieux. Consider, Sare Marmaduke, whether it is as it should be to apply it to the wife of monsieur, your son, and to the mother perhaps of the descendants who shall perpetuate your name!"

She has advanced a step or two in her excitement. She confronts him boldly with flashing eyes, and the sick man, in the midst of his wrath, feels a thrill of something like admiration for the dauntlessness of bearing which contrasts so advantageously with the dejected, hang-dog mien of the husband whom she claims.

"All that she says is true," admits Chandos, sulkily. "I have since found out, however, that the officiating clergyman was not a priest at all, but a low, pawnbroking fellow, whose acquaintance I accidentally formed at Scarborough, and who passed himself off upon me under an assumed name as a man in Holy Orders. The marriage is null and void."

"Any other supposition would be simply preposterous," comments Lady Knollys, with stately frigidity. "Millefleurs, you may pack your box and come to me for your wages. I regret it will be impossible for me to give you a character."

"Miladi," says the girl, in solemn appeal, "have pity of me! Figure to yourself that in the sight of the good God I am Chandos's wife, even if it be possible that a legal objection can dissolve our union. Command him that he be faithful to me for the honour of a gentleman and for common honesty."

"The thing is ridiculous," answers miladi, icily. "Sir Marmaduke, I think we have wasted too many words upon so ridiculous a liaison."

Then the Frenchwoman turns from the sight of that pitiless, immovable haughtiness and addresses herself, still in tones of pathetic, appealing solemnity, to her husband.

"Chandos," she cries—"Chandos, mon mari, have pity of me! It is only a few short weeks since I was your bride; only a few short weeks since we stood in the garden at Glenriff! Said I not that of matrimony the holy sacrament forged bonds irrevocable that might never be broken? Swore you not that to cast them aside you would never desire?"

"I was a fool, and you were a greater one!" replies the young man, brutally.

"Eh bien! to implore I have no longer the patience!" exclaims the girl, with a sudden change of manner. "It is for me to assert my right. Sare Marmaduke, know you well the Scotch marriage law?"

"Pretty well," answers the baronet, wonderingly. "I remember going to Edinburgh with a reading-party in my young days, and being warned by my tutor of its danger. If any young fool can be induced to recognise a girl as his wife before witnesses, and to cohabit with her afterwards, they are legally married. It is a disgrace to the kingdom that such an anomaly should still exist."

"Good! The fact of its existence suffices," says mademoiselle. "The young fool—behold him; a word he himself has applied. The girl, it is I, Lavinie Knollys—née Millefleurs. The place of recognition, the English church at Glenriff, a little Scotch village, over the border about ten miles. Choose you, Sare Marmaduke—miladi—Chandos, mon mari, either the peace or the war I am ready. If the peace, I shall conform myself in all things to please you as the daughter and the wife; if the war, I go tout de suite to un avoué, a sollemaiteure of law, to demand that he fight my case, to dispute which cannot be done. I say to you—choose!"

She looks from one to another questioningly, and they in their turn contemplate each other in blank dismay. Lady Knollys is the first to speak.

"We will never admit the claim—never!" she cries, passionately.

"It is enough," answers mademoiselle, with dignity. "From my avoué you shall hear shortly. We will recriminate no more, miladi; une querelle de famille is of the most bitter always. Adieu!"

With a comprehensive bow she sweeps from the room, and still the others contemplate each other in blank dismay until the silence is broken by a savage execration from the baronet.

"You must send for the family lawyers at once," suggests his wife, anxiously.

"All the lawyers in Christendom cannot mend the matter if the girl has stated it correctly," says Sir Marmaduke. "Well, fool, you have made a rod for your own back. The Frenchwoman is your wife to a certainty. Thank Heaven! it will not matter much."

But of that enigmatical phrase, "it will not matter much," he declines to accord any explanation. Mother and son straightway forget it, under the unwelcome pressure of their novel burden of care.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Thou sate and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts.

THE weeks creep slowly at Doctor Ireton's Sanitarium, for Mrs. Matthews, the nurse, has made no sign. Every morning when the grey dawn begins to lighten the obscurity of his cell Sim Blunt wakes and looks to see whether the promised note has been thrust beneath his door. Every morning he throws himself again upon his pallet, groaning with the heart-sickness of hope deferred.

The confinement begins to tell upon him. His always gaunt frame is wasted to emaciation, his little, deepest eyes appear larger than they were wont to do, they have a lurid, unnatural brilliancy, which might almost convince the beholder that he is really mad.

After the free, wild life to which he has been accustomed the restraints of discipline seem at times unbearable. The patience with which for a long time he bore his incarceration is exhausted; he paces the acre and half of enclosed ground with the restlessness of a caged beast, often feeling disposed to dash his head against the solid surrounding wall, and so end his misery. He would have tried to end it ere now by a proceeding almost as desperate, a second attempt to break prison, but for the

kindly light which beams upon him from a woman's eyes.

For although the nurse has made no sign a look of intelligence passes between them when there is no probability it may be observed. He reads compassion in that comely face, and the sight of it has become the one pleasant thing in his existence.

They do not often meet, for her duties lie amongst the women in a part of the building he is not allowed to enter, nor have they had an opportunity to exchange a sentence, but he trusts her and believes in her notwithstanding. By degrees that steadfast hope eventually to escape to which he clings with the tenacity of a drowning man to a straw has come to mean that he hopes and believes she will find out a way.

"Wait!" she whispered once, or rather her lips suggested the word, although no sound proceeded from them, and in his heart he said again, "God bless ye, my dear," as at the midnight interview in which she proved herself the "bravest, pluckiest lass" he ever saw.

But, ah! the weary waiting grows intolerable. He feels that if he remain here much longer shut up amongst these drivelling lunatics he will himself go mad.

He has but one mental resource to cheer the monotony, and that is to brood over his wrongs and form schemes of revenge. Hard indeed will it go with those who put him here, if the quondam gold-digger once find himself a free agent beyond the walls of the Sanitarium.

The doctor, the lawyer, the baronet, will surely be made pay the penalty each in his degree. Capable of the most malignant cruelty, Sim Blunt feels himself to be, if once he find an opportunity to wreak vindictive vengeance upon those who have caused him such suffering.

One morning, after turning and tossing wakefully the livelong night, he drops off to sleep in the small hours, and fails to waken at the grey dawn.

Not till the heavy key turns in the lock, and one of the massive bolts is withdrawn with a dull thud, does he rouse himself to the consciousness that another monotonous day has begun. From sheer force of habit and without hope or expectation he looks to the door.

There, about five inches from it, lies a scrap of twisted paper. With a bound he leaps from the bed. It is the narrowest of narrow escapes. The door is swinging back as he secures that precious missive which heralds the crisis of his fate.

"Umph! you'll get no breakfast," growls the keeper, and Mr. Blunt, counterfeiting drowsiness, rubs his eyes and grumbles that he had no notion it was so late.

Then the man retires, and Mr. Blunt, placing his back against the door, proceeds to untwist that precious scrap with red, clumsy fingers which shake as though he were suddenly stricken with the palsy.

"Be ready to-night," runs the note. "Join me as soon after midnight as you think will be prudent. I shall keep a light burning, and leave my door ajar."

"A brave wench! a rare, brave, true-hearted wench!" mutters the prisoner, when he has laboriously puzzled out the clear, firm calligraphy.

Then an observer, were there one, would imagine that Sim Blunt was seized with a fit of sentimental tenderness, for he raises the laconic epistle to his lips, and mumbles over it even longer than the most ardent lover might do over his mistress's billet-doux. When he takes his hand away the billet-doux has disappeared. Mr. Blunt has eaten it.

He has eaten it, lest even the shreds should betray him. All day he is feverishly excited, and Doctor Ireton, remarking his mental condition, congratulates himself that it is far more easy to madden a sane man than to cure a madman of his insanity.

It is night. Once more Sim Blunt, at the regulation hour, is marched to his cell; once more the bolts and the bars which shut him in are securely fastened. He lies down dressed as



[AN APPEAL.]

he is upon his pallet, and tries to compose himself to calmness, that he may count the flying moments with accuracy.

Flying moments did I say? Nay, crawling moments were the fitter term, seconds which crawl as the years must do in the eternity of the lost.

Many a time, starting with apprehension, he grasps the screwdriver and the chisel hastily at the thought that the night has flown and the inmates of the Sanitarium will presently be up and stirring.

Then he sinks back again upon the bed, silently cursing his fears, and telling himself that at daybreak, if he waited so long, their sleep would be most profound.

So he constrains himself to inaction, determined that if he err it shall be on the side of prudent tardiness rather than of precipitation, and whilst for the hundredth time he thus resolves something occurs which almost startles him into uttering a yell of terror.

It is only a low tap-tap-tapping at the door, and after the momentary shock the correct explanation flashes upon him. Mrs. Matthews has stolen along the corridor, thus to intimate that in her judgment the time is ripe for the execution of her project.

Cautiously, with trembling fingers, which grasp the tools as though he loved them, and they were sentient things rough usage might hurt, he addresses himself to the now easy task of unscrewing the hinges of the door. Again, writhing, twisting like an eel, he forces his long body through the aperture.

He stands upright in the long, narrow passage with his boots in his hand and looks along it to the distant streak of light which tells where Mrs. Matthews keeps noiseless vigil.

Upon the cool flags his steps fall soundlessly, and give no warning of his coming, but as he approaches the nurse's room he sees her standing in the doorway, dressed as for a journey, and his heart makes one great leap of hopeful, exultant joy.

"Come within and listen to my plan," she says, calmly. "The janitor is taking a week's holiday, and his bull-dog accompanies him. I have drugged the keeper who takes temporary duty, and in this paper are some lumps of poisoned meat, any one of which will administer to the mastiff outside his quietus if he swallows it. If not—"

"This here chisel is purty sharp," suggests Sim Blunt, with a silent grin.

"I will take you to the drugged man's room, and wait outside whilst you possess yourself of the keys. Two big lots remember, one for the door of the building, one for that of the outer wall. Are you ready, or is there anything you would like to ask? We must not whisper in the passage."

"I'm ready," he replies, gruffly.

They pass out. Shading the light with her hand she precedes him through the narrow, winding ways, which are so much like those of a fortress or a prison that they incite one to curious speculations concerning the tastes and ideas of the eccentric misanthropist who designed them, and she stops at length before a closed door, motioning him to enter.

Then they stand regarding each other. The man, shaking in every limb, not with fear, but with the painful emotion of intense, suppressed excitement; the woman, pale, but quietly resolute and perfectly composed.

"I—I am afraid I shall knock something down," he whispers, hoarsely.

"I will go," says Mrs. Matthews; and with that she turns the handle and leaves him.

Sim Blunt leans against the stone wall and wipes his damp brow with a feeling of mingled relief and shame.

"I'll make it up to her," he thinks. "She sartinly is the bravest wench—"

His meditations are satisfactorily interrupted. The nurse reappears with a bunch of huge keys in her hand, and closes the door behind her softly.

"I have had a fright," she whispers, a shudder

crossing her comely face, and for the first time marring its serenity. "He lay so still I feared I had overdosed him and that he was dead."

At that frightful possibility Sim Blunt shudders also.

They have reached the big door, and it is her steady hands which undo the fastenings and turn the key. When they have taken a step or two into the open air she goes back, as one struck by an afterthought to remove the key, to close the door, to lock it from the outside.

"It will delay pursuit for a little if they discover our flight," she explains.

Then the great mastiff awakens and begins to growl uneasily and fiercely somewhere in the surrounding gloom.

"I'll settle that gen'leman," mutters Sim Blunt, grasping his chisel.

But the nurse quietly selects a lump of meat from her paper, and when the brute dashes at them presently, baying savagely, she throws it to him with a fearless word in a tone he knows. They hurry swiftly; after that they are sure he will trouble them no more.

"You can unlock the wall door," says Mrs. Matthews, handing her companion the keys. "In another minute you will be free."

It is very dark and fine rain is falling. As Sim Blunt fumbles clumsily amongst the bolts and fastenings the nurse looks back towards the house. Lights are gleaming in some of the windows; the Sanitarium is astir.

"Quick! quick, for Heaven's sake! You will be taken yet!" she cries; and at that instant the heavy booming clangour of a bell is heard, menacing them through the gloom, whilst Mr. Blunt, surprised and terrified, uttering an exclamation of dismay, stoops and begins to grope amongst the grass at his feet.

"What is the matter? Why do you not undo the door?" cries Mrs. Matthews, anxiously.

"By Blazes!" growls Sim Blunt. "That darned alarm-bell frightened me so I've dropped the keys!"

(To be Continued.)

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[A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.]

PRETTY POLLY.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

MYSELF.

"Hylsbroke, Devonshire,
"12th May, 187—.

"MY DEAR HAROLD,

"When I heard from Powlett, as I did this morning, that he had met you a few days since in the Strand, with a skin browned by tropical suns, and 'bearded like the pard,' my first almost irresistible impulse was to rush up to town by the earliest train that I could catch and pounce upon you in the 'growlery' that you have no doubt established. But several obstacles to such a course presented themselves, the most insurmountable being the fact that I am at present the only man of medicine in the neighbourhood, and as a very nasty sort of low fever is hanging about, and a large proportion of the inhabitants of Hylsbroke are under my care at this writing, I cannot very well desert my post. But a 'happy thought strikes me,' not to 'swear eternal friendship'—that we did long years ago—but that you should imitate the very sensible plan followed by Mahomet when he found the mountain immovable. In other words, my dear old friend, I want you to pack your portmanteau, charter a hansom to Paddington, from whence take your ticket to Newton Abbot—which is, as you are aware, the nearest station to this place—and be with me as soon as you can after this reaches you. I need hardly say that your welcome will be of the heartiest, and that I shall most anxiously expect your arrival, and trusting in that I will not attempt to write you a long letter now, but

postpone to our meeting all questions as to what you have been doing with yourself all these years past, and how the world has used me since the old dissecting-room days at Bartholomew's, where we tackled many 'an upper extremity' together. Understand, I will take no denial, and shall be on the look out for you by midday to-morrow at the latest. Till that time arrives, and brings you with it, believe me yours in all sincerity, "OLIVER MUSGRAVE."

A hearty, friendly enough letter to get from a man I have not seen for nearly twenty years, not even heard of for more than three-quarters of that time. Genuine in its tone of friendliness too, one would think, and most people would be inclined to accept it as such.

But I, Harold Cardonnel, am not as ready as most people to place implicit truth in wordy professions of friendship. In days gone by, indeed, I too was credulous as the majority of mankind, and in those days he whose letter I have just laid down while I consider what answer I shall make to it was to me as David unto Jonathan, Pylades to Orestes, Damon to Pythias, my brother in heart, though not in blood, my kindly guide and Mentor, whose very simplicity and absence of all guile made me regard with something of reverence even while in my youthful heedlessness I set his counsels at naught.

We were fellow students at Bartholomew's, Oliver Musgrave and I, but he being three or four years the elder was the first to leave, and though for some time we corresponded regularly, our intercourse died a violent death at a time when I, at war with the world and myself, heartsick, and with all faith in man and woman destroyed, left England to wander over the face of the earth in search of the one boon I craved—forgetfulness.

Looking back now, aided by the light of long experience and, I trust, a higher wisdom, I can see that possibly that which I sought had been sooner found, had been of a more satisfying and enduring nature, by remaining at home and seeking it in work that lay near to my hand;

but retrospect like this is vain as the errors it recalls.

To my story.

When Oliver Musgrave took the last of his degrees and left London to assist in his uncle's practice at Hylsbroke, nearly twenty years ago, I was left entirely alone, for I had no near relations in the world, and being then of a sociable disposition, but home-loving rather than inclined to "see life" from the point of view which has usually most attractions in the adolescent period, I felt slightly downcast at the solitary prospect before me when the lodgings I had hitherto shared with Oliver came to have me for their sole tenant, and for a few weeks my loneliness was as great as I had pictured it might be.

Then came a halcyon period, a sudden brightness in my life, a glimpse of happiness that even to this day I can remember, and shall remember when I am on my dying bed, I suppose.

A glimpse do I say? Nay, more, a full and complete vision that filled my soul, that occupied my every thought, and made me—poor fool that I was—imagine for a time that earth was once again the Paradise it was before the first man fell into that fatal slumber during which Eve was fashioned.

Even as Adam woke to fuller life and joy, so woke I when one evening my tea and chop came to me carried by the fairest and most perfect-featured girl I had ever seen. I thought so then. I still retain the belief, and shall do ever.

She was my landlady's niece, had come to stay with her and help her in the house. I soon contrived to discover so much. Her name—Rose Mullins.

Not a high-sounding or mellifluous surname, but the first was enough for me, and soon there came to be none other in the world so full of poetry to my ears. I was a fool, no doubt, but in that respect I claim no advantage over my fellow men. I loved her. I told her so at last, and she—

Are all women hypocrites at heart, I wonder?

Do they all lie as she did when she smiled, ah, so sweetly, and looked so timidly back in my face—blushing, too—as she murmured at last the answer that I prayed for? Was she false then, or did she indeed care for me, as she so often vowed she did, with all her heart and soul?

For my part I made no secret of my passion. I gloried in it rather, and there were none to say me nay had I chosen to take my wife from the gutter.

For a time all went smoothly. Mrs. Mullins, my landlady, was delighted at her niece's conquest of a gentleman, for Rose was one of a large family whose father—Mrs. Mullins's brother-in-law, hence their identity of name—was but a petty country tradesman, unable to provide any portion for his daughters, finding it a hard struggle, indeed, to keep so many clothed and fed, wherefore Rose, the eldest, was glad enough to accept her aunt's offer of a home in return for what help she could give in the house.

A lover's judgment is necessarily partial, but I have a portrait of her still, a trumpy photograph, inartistic and unflattering enough, Heaven knows, which even now when I look upon I can picture no more beautiful face. And I won this perfect creature. She was to be mine, my wife. I would have had it so at once, but Mrs. Mullins, worthy, cautious soul, advised prudence, that I should make a little way in the world first and ensure at least a home to which my bride could go, and I, smiling to myself at the good woman's worldly wisdom, and with a youth's romantic desire to be loved for my own sake only, hid from them the fact that I was not dependent upon my profession for a livelihood, that I possessed a competency, enough at least for comfort, did I choose to live in idleness, and took delight in speaking to Rose about our future plans, and what economies we must practise until my prospects brightened, thinking all the while how like the lord of Burleigh I was to surprise her by-and-bye with the knowledge of my wealth.

And she would listen and assent to all the plans I proposed with willing tongue and ready smile, which seemed to me like a glimpse of Heaven, while in her heart discontent with such a humdrum existence as I pictured grew and grew, fostered by the lying, treacherous tongue of him who stole her from me, deceived and then abandoned her for some new pursuit.

For such was the fate that befell her. Who or what was the man by whom she was led to shame, induced to forego a true and honest love that would have been lifelong for a brief space of luxury and delusive delight, I never discovered, and well for him—perhaps for myself—that it was so.

She was beautiful, as I have said, but that she was vain, and, if not heartless, of no great depth of character is equally true. To me at that time, however, she was all in mind as well as face and figure that woman should be, perfect, and I trusted her wholly and entirely till the blow fell which proved my faith misplaced.

She left the house one night never to return, never for me to look upon again save once, then only to hear her last words, to close her eyes in death.

A few lines left in her room addressed to me were the only clue to her motives. She had not ceased to love me, she said, and she was sorry to cause me pain, but she was afraid she should make a bad wife for a poor man, and one who was rich, very rich, had wooed her. She could not tell his name yet, for he had forbidden it, having great relations who would be offended by his marrying so much beneath him, so that at present it must be kept secret. She hoped that I would soon learn to forget one who had given me so poor a return for my love and find someone more deserving it.

And so the note concluded, and as I read her name at the close I tore the paper into fragments, which I cast from me as I swore I would cast her image from my heart.

Then—let it be remembered before I record my humiliation that I was but little more than a boy in actual years, and this was the first great trial of my life—I wept and bemoaned my

fate, calling on Rose—my Rose, ha! ha!—to come back to me, that I would forgive her all—all if she would but return, and in my mad infatuation I even inserted advertisements in all the papers worded in the same manner.

But this phase of my infatuation soon passed, to be succeeded by one even more unhealthy. I burned then with a fierce desire for revenge. I sought far and wide in London, Paris, Berlin, and all the great centres of gaiety, and ever in my breast—whether attired in simple travelling suit, in walking costume, or full evening dress (which last I often donned, for had not Rose said that her seducer was wealthy, and that being so it was only natural that I should look for them in the more select parts of the theatres, opera houses, and such-like places of amusement which I haunted?)—I carried a revolver loaded in every chamber, the last of which I fully meant to turn upon myself when the others had done their deadly work.

For nearly a year I pursued my search, but fruitlessly. I had no clue to guide me. Without her by his side I might have brushed shoulders a dozen times a day with the man I hated with so fierce a hate, might even—and this thought so worked upon me, absurd as it was, that I shunned all but the most formal intercourse with strangers—have exchanged civilities with the man whose life I had sworn to take whenever I met him.

At last I gave it up and returned to London. There, after all, I thought was the surest place to find my unknown enemy, and there I resolved to hide my time till I should meet with him, and while I waited I drifted downwards on the tide of recklessness and dissipation. I drank hard, but never to intoxication. My purpose was still as fixed as when I first formed it, and, to ensure that I should let no chance escape of carrying it out, it was above all things necessary that I should at all times have full possession of my senses.

That Rose was actually married I never for a moment believed. Even had I done so I doubt whether I should have felt my own wrong less great, my desire for vengeance less keen.

But I dwell longer than I intended on this part of my story. Let me hasten onwards. It is not a period that I can look back upon with satisfaction, that time when but one thought—a murderous wish that I hardly know even now whether I repent—held me in its sway. It never left me then, though at times it slumbered, and to drive my misery as far off as was possible I sought what of pleasure I could find in scenes and places that I care not to think of now. At one of my nightly haunts, a resort for the most reckless of my own sex, the lost and abandoned of the other, I was more than once roused to something like interest in a girl who appeared less bold than her sisters in vice.

There was a look of modesty, an expression that it would hardly be a misnomer to call pure, in her face which somehow or other reminded me of my poor lost Rose. Amongst the class to which she belonged surnames are seldom heard; they called her Pretty Polly, and I followed the usual custom. This is not fiction, but a tale of saddest truth, and I thank Heaven most humbly now that beyond an occasional careless greeting, a few chance words exchanged with her, my acquaintance with Marian Drayton—for such I learned was the name she was known by—extended no further.

One night—ah! I ever forget it?—I was sitting at one of the marble-topped tables in the vast hall, all gilt and mirrors, more silent and absorbed than usual. The fate of my lost love was in my thoughts, strangely persistent, the image of her face before me which way I gazed. Over my head a well-trained orchestral band furnished music for a score or so of couples who slowly circled round to the soft strains of Die Lieben Langen Tag valse, an air that haunts me to this day. Suddenly I felt a light touch on my arm, and turned to see Pretty Polly beside me.

Her eyes were red, her lips quivered as she spoke and asked me to leave the place with her. Why, I cannot say even now, I acquiesced without a word; only when we emerged into the

street and she stepped into a cab which was evidently awaiting her and looked towards me as if expecting me to follow did I hesitate.

"What is the meaning of this fooling?" I demanded, roughly. "Can't you speak here, if you have anything to say?"

"Ah! don't be angry, Mr. Cardonnel," said the girl, leaning forward and looking pitifully at me. "She cannot die, she says, without asking you to forgive her."

"She! Who?" I asked, with a gasp, but I knew before the one word in answer passed her lips.

"Rose."

I stumbled into the cab, and presently found myself alighting from it before a quiet, respectable-looking house in a street all the houses of which were as outwardly decorous and respectable.

Presently, I say, because I afterwards found that the street was hardly half a mile from the place I had been called from, but at the time I knew not whether the distance was miles or yards, whether the time could be counted by hours or minutes.

My mind was a blank till I woke to know that I was standing by a bedside and looking down upon the face I knew so well—upon my own lost love.

She did not die till the next day. Ah! I can write calmly about it now, but for all that I wept like a very woman when I knew that then indeed she had gone from me for ever. Few words passed between us, for consciousness was almost gone when I arrived.

But she knew me, and I hope, I think, I comforted her dying hours with the assurance that I forgave her fully and entirely, and when, after several hours of insensibility the girl I had once hoped would be my wife passed from this world where the end of her brief, ill-starred existence was shame and sin, it was with her hand in mine, it was to me that her last words were spoken.

She had been ill for more than a fortnight, her companion told me, having caught a violent cold which resulted in acute inflammation of the lungs. They had shared the same lodgings for several months, and Rose had seen me one night at the dancing rooms.

"She went away at once, and has never been there since, fearful of a meeting with you," said Polly. "But when she knew that she was dying—poor girl—she let me have no rest until I promised to bring you to her."

"Did she," I asked—"did she ever tell you who it was that robbed me of her and then flung her aside like a worthless toy when he tired of her?"

"Never."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, Mr. Cardonnel," the girl replied, with a tone of proud sadness, as though she resented the implied doubt but felt that it was useless to express her resentment. "I don't think—nay, I am sure I should not tell you if she had, for there is an evil purpose in your eye, and I would not help you to commit a crime. The Lord judgeth, and in His hands is vengeance. Even if you could have your will upon that poor girl's betrayer it would not bring her back to life."

"You have mistaken your vocation, Miss Drayton," I said, with a cold scorn which I felt to be cruel and unmanly even as I uttered the sneer. "You should be a preacher, if women were admitted to the priesthood, instead of—"

"What I am," she broke in, with such a tone of sad reproach as made me feel ashamed even in my despairing grief and wrath combined. "I deserve it—yes, I know that, but you might have spared me the taunt."

"Pardon me, I was a brute—a coward," I said, heartily repenting my coarse speech. "Let me say one thing to repair my fault. You, who can speak to me so, cannot be utterly lost. To such as you this life must be unendurable—a constant misery. If for no other reason, for the sake of that poor girl who was my promised wife and your friend, let me help you to retrieve the past

and seek a brighter and more peaceful future. I am not without the means to assist you, and if you will—"

Again she broke in upon my speech.

"It is good, very good of you," she said. "Don't think I am ungrateful for such an offer, but—I cannot accept it."

"You prefer then to sink—as sink you must?"

"Or rise unaided, redeem myself, Mr. Cardonnel, by my own efforts, by work, however hard, rather than a method so easy as you suggest. Yes," she continued, with a far-away, earnest look in her eyes, "I have done with the shameful past from this moment. Your words have but fixed a resolution I had already taken. I thank you for them, though, believe me, and for your kindness to a fallen wretch like me, and though we may never meet again—I hope we never may—I shall not cease to remember and to pray for you, if the prayer of such as I can avail."

So we parted, and from that day to this I have neither seen nor heard aught of Marian Drayton. Better that it should be so, as she hoped, for should she have regained a place, however humble, amongst honest people, it would be painful to us both.

But that is a most improbable chance to occur. It is more than fifteen years since I parted from her at the gate of the little churchyard where Rose was laid, Marian and I her only mourners—Mrs. Mullins, relentless even to the dead, refused to attend the funeral—and since that day I have visited the remotest corners of the globe, have traversed vast plains and vaster forests, have penetrated regions hitherto unknown, and now, tired of wandering, have settled down in London, where—if I would—I might be made a lion of for the season and then dropped to make room for some new sensation.

But I refuse all invitations. I am a bore, some people say, a cynic, others, rude and uncivilised, all. Perhaps I am; I daresay I am, indeed, for even the warm appeal of my old friend Oliver Musgrave is a nuisance. Confound that Powlett, I think. Why could he not hold his tongue, and not go blurring out to everyone he meets that I am in England?

It is a nuisance, but here is Oliver's letter by my side, and it must be answered one way or the other.

Which shall it be?

CHAPTER II.

MY FRIEND.

I HAVE decided, or rather chance has decided, for me—I am to go. Chance, I say, has decided the question. I took a coin out of my pocket just now and was prepared to spin it in the air—heads I go, tails and Oliver Musgrave will look for me in vain at Newton Abbot station. But that seemed a vulgar method, so I put back my half-crown and invented a new Sortes Virgiliane.

I have been reading. The book lies beside me on the table. It is Charles Reade's "Put Yourself in His Place," a book which I never tire of. Any other, however, would answer my purpose equally well now. I open it at random, having settled in my mind to read onwards from the top line of the right-hand side page until I spelt out two words. If "yes" should come first then will I go to Hylsbroke, if "no" remain where I am.

The oracle is open before me ready to speak, yet I hesitate before consulting it. I tell myself that it is absurd, unlike a human being, to leave accident to settle his course of action. Besides, after all when I come to think of it, my plan is not altogether fair, that the preponderating chances are in favour of the shorter monosyllable. "Y" is a letter much less commonly used than "n," and although "e" appears in type nearly double as often as "o" there will still be the "s." In fact, in betting phraseology, the odds are three to two against my journey to Devonshire.

Well, so much the better; I really don't want to go; but I have been reading "Put Yourself in His Place," as I said. I put myself in Oliver Musgrave's place and determine that he shall have an equal chance at any rate. "Yea" and "nay" shall be the words, and I take up the book.

The top line of the right-hand page is the commencement of chapter thirteen, and runs thus:

"If Mr. Coventry, before he set all this mischief moving, could—"

Then it is off my mind. "Yea" has won in a canter, and I dash off a few lines to Oliver informing him of the result, but holding my tongue as to the means by which it has been arrived at, and next morning I am flying past Windsor's royal castle, over the natural amphitheatre in which lies Bath, through the valley of the Exe, and on till the wide waters of the Channel are dashing up almost to the carriage wheels as we near Dawlish—fairest of watering-places round that coast, and at last, a little cramped after my long journey, alight at the station, where my friend is waiting for me.

A tall, thin and loose-jointed figure was Oliver Musgrave when last I saw him, a face sallow of hue and smooth almost as a boy's. Can this be he—this stalwart-framed, burly man, with what of his features can be seen for the bushy growth of beard as ruddy red as the soil of his native Devonshire?

I am the only passenger who has got out of the train, and Oliver stares for a moment, then passes me, looking into the carriages, pauses, turns again, and approaches.

I hold out my hand; the next moment it is held in a firm grip that makes even me wince, and my muscles are not so soft.

"It is you, then," he said. "My dear old Har—"

He turns his head away for a moment, over my own eyes there comes a little mist, but we are men, and Englishmen to boot, and what true-born Briton can endure anything like the show of sentiment. Sentiment! Rubbish!

We are ourselves again.

"So glad to see you, old boy," rings out a hearty voice. "Had a pleasant journey, I hope? Where's your luggage? Is that all?" as a battered old portmanteau that has been my companion in many thousand miles of travel is deposited beside us. "Come along, then."

Five minutes later we are bowling along behind a fast-trotting mare, all bone and muscle. "Not much to look at, but a rare good 'un to go," as Oliver observes; and the brown mare, perhaps conscious that she has a stranger behind her, does not belie her master's praises as she carries us at a rattling pace along the narrow road bordered on each side by tall banks, on which grow hawthorn and wild fuchsias that overhang our heads.

For a time but few words pass between us. The mare is fresh, though she has already been driven the same road to meet me, and Oliver's attention is pretty well taken up in reducing her to order. But by-and-bye she steadies down to her work in more equable fashion, and leaves him more at liberty, of which he avails himself to have "a good look at me."

"No, I never should have known you, Harold," he says. "You are changed, and no mistake!"

"And you," I reply.

"Well, yes, I suppose so. Twenty years do make a difference, no doubt, but not for the worse, I hope."

"As it has done with me," say I.

Oliver looks grave.

"I wish I could contradict you," he answers. "Wo ho, lass, steady!" as the mare gives a bound at sight of a rabbit that scampers across the road.

"But candour won't allow you," I say, to his last remark, when we settle down again. "However, don't trouble yourself about my looks, Noll, I'm sound as a roach."

"In body, yes; but—"

I put my hand upon his arm.

"Noll," I say, "old wounds sometimes break out afresh when meddled with. I don't care to

speak even to you of the sore trouble that made my life a blank."

"A woman, of course?"

I laugh mirthlessly.

"What else makes all our misery in this world?" I say.

"And all our joy," he adds, with such a soft, tender look in his eyes that I know he at least has found happiness.

"You are married, Noll?" I say, abruptly.

"Why, certainly, and to the best, the dearest—but there, you'll see and know her for yourself soon," he goes on. "I used to think I was cut out for an old bachelor, but when Marian came in my way I soon found out what a mistake I had made, and surrendered at discretion. But, lord, you wouldn't believe what a job I had to bring her to book!"

"Indeed!"

No need now to warn him off the subject I would fain avoid; he is started fairly, and as we proceed he pours out the story of his wooing, singing his wife's praises in terms more to be expected from a lover than a five years' husband, for such I learn is the time he has been married.

"And it is ten since first she came to Hylsbroke," continues my friend. "Yes, half that time I laid almost daily siege to her. I had almost begun to despair, but I never quite gave up. I was sure I should succeed if I had only patience, and I did."

"She had need be a paragon to merit such devotion," I remark, and perhaps there is something of a sneer in my tone, born of my own conviction that all women are alike unworthy, for Oliver answers me gravely.

"I'm sorry to hear you speak like that," he says. "There are good women in the world, believe that, Harold, even if one has deceived you."

"And Mrs. Musgrave is of them," I answer, anxious to atone for my fault. "I will believe that, at least, Noll."

"You will confess as much freely before many days," he says; and I make up my mind that I will act the hypocrite rather than disappoint my dear old friend.

For, say he is in a fool's paradise, why should I disturb it? If happiness is gained by self-deception, why should one whose eyes have been opened seek to cure a blindness which confers bliss?

I will be careful, I will curb my tongue and forbear such bitter speech as is its wont to utter, and I listen with all patience—perhaps a little pitying contempt for such infatuation—while Oliver beguiles the time with that one theme he loves above all others—his wife's praises.

"It's not her beauty alone," he says, pouring out the honest fulness of his heart. "Very likely indeed you won't think that very remarkable now, though had you seen her when she first came among us you must have admitted it, but I daresay she is changed, although to me she is and always will be the same, bless her dear, sweet face. She is so sweet, so gentle, and so humble. Why, she hasn't the least idea how good she is, or why all people love her. For they do, everyone, old and young, rich and poor. There's not a soul in Hylsbroke but knows her worth. But I'm a tiresome idiot, I daresay you think," he goes on to say, "I am boring you?"

I hasten to assure him that he was never more mistaken, and I speak the honest truth. I am a cynic, people say so, and it must be true, but what I don't believe in myself I have no objection to others believing—always provided there is no affectation in their profession of faith—and Oliver's enthusiasm is so real, so unforced, that even while I inwardly scoff at it something is stirred within me which makes me almost envy his childlike confidence, and I suppose my outward manner shows so much of interest that he resumes.

It is a long drive, for though Hylsbroke is not much more than twelve miles from the station the roads are steep, necessitating much walking up hill and cautious driving down, so that we are over two hours doing the distance, and all that time I declare Oliver's tongue has hardly stopped once.

But I don't mind, it is quite refreshing to hear this burly giant talk. I feel as though I were listening to a little child, whose simple faith, however so little I share, it would be sacrilege to disturb.

His wife has no relations, he tells me. She is an orphan. Her mother, whose only child she was, died when she was a girl. Then her father married again, and his second wife had several children, and Marian was hardly treated, or so Oliver imagines from various accidental revelations of her early life, for she never says so in actual words, only that she was glad at last to leave home and take a situation as governess, for she had received a fair education.

Then her father died, and her stepmother went to Australia to join a bachelor brother, taking with her Marian's half-brothers and sisters. Yes, they were relations, certainly, and his wife keeps up a sort of correspondence with them, but virtually she was alone in the world when he first met her.

She came from a ladies' school near London, where she had been several years, to take the post of mistress at Hylsbroke Normal School. More than one offer of marriage she had, Oliver's among the rest, but to all she returned the same answer—that she never intended to marry.

"And it was five years—five years of long, weary waiting—before I induced her to change her mind," my friend says; "though she has since confessed that she cared for me all along."

"Then why on earth—" I begin.

"Didn't she say so at once, you mean," breaks in Oliver. "Well, there's no accounting for women's ways, you know. But—I—I rather fancy—"

And he hesitates a little, but then goes on.

"I couldn't talk about her so freely to anyone else, you know," he says (of course he thoroughly believes that he is speaking the truth, but I find out afterwards that there are very few people within a twenty-mile radius of Hylsbroke that Oliver Musgrave has not at some time or other sung his one song to). "I think that there has been someone else."

"Think!" I repeat. "Surely she would have told you?"

"If I'd wanted to know, yes," says the honest fellow. "But I didn't, you see. If she had a disappointment why should I make her unhappy by bringing it to her mind, making her talk of what's past and gone? No, no. 'You may have cared for someone else long ago,' I said to her, 'plenty must have cared for you, I'm sure of that—who could help it?—but that's not the point. Do you care for me a little bit now?' And then she looked shyly up at me—I'd got hold of her fast enough, and wasn't going to loose her without an answer—and said, well, never mind what she said—and he sniggers, I can't use any other word, and blushes like a schoolgirl, if they ever blush, which I'm much inclined to doubt—"enough that her answer made me the happiest of men, and—and there she is, bless her!"

And this rare avis, this husband, who after five years of wedded life still regards his wife with the eye of a lover, bundles the reins into my hand, after pulling up the mare with a jerk opposite the gate of a pretty little house at the entrance to the village, jumps down, and rushes up the path to where stands, under a porch that is one mass of clematis, a female whose face I cannot plainly make out at this distance, but whose figure, clad in a light summer dress of sober hue, is well-formed enough, no doubt, though by no means of sylph-like proportions, rather inclined to plumpness indeed, but perhaps not more so than becomes a matron. By her side is a little child, a girl, I think, but may be a boy, I'm sure I can't tell, and presently the two are gathered in those stout arms of my friend.

I look on amused, compassionately tolerant. What an ass he is, to be sure, I think, but I also think that life would be a happier thing for me if I were such an ass.

Now he comes back—he does not attempt to apologise for having deserted me in so unceremonious a fashion, nor do I want any

apology, to tell the truth—and with him an elderly man in a nondescript sort of costume, half groom, half gardener, who takes the mare's head while I get down and leads her off to the stable.

Then I follow Oliver up to the door, wherein stands a fair, shy-looking woman, who holds out her hand to me, as my friend says:

"My wife, Harold," ah, and with what a tone of loving pride he speaks the words; "she knows your name well enough. I hope you'll like each other as well as I like both of you—that is, within limits, you know, or I shall be jealous."

And he roars with laughter, as if he has uttered the most comical jest, while Mrs. Musgrave, in a soft, pleasing voice, bids me welcome.

I suppose it is only fancy, but there seems to me to be a sort of constraint in her manner, not marked, and yet I seem to feel it, and it must be nothing more than fancy, too, that her hand trembled a little as it rested in mine.

She certainly is very nervous, shrinking, I may almost say, but very likely she is unaccustomed to strangers. I must try and put her at her ease, for though I by no means endorse Oliver's extravagant raptures about his wife's beauty, I like her features.

She has been good-looking, no doubt, but she is no longer young—nearer forty than thirty, I should say—and there is a thread or two of silver mingled with the nut-brown of her hair.

Well, I am just as well pleased, I think. I was half afraid of meeting some simpering, wax-dollish inanity. This is a woman of flesh and blood, a good woman too, if women are ever good—I must insert that saving clause, or I shall lose my character as a cynic—or faces are not to be trusted.

Bah! I trusted one once as fair and innocent as ever the sun shone on. They're all alike, all.

I have been here a week, and under the influence of my genial host's companionship, his wife's watchful care for my comfort, I am really beginning to think that I have done well in coming. I am afraid, indeed, that I cannot consistently accept much longer the title of "bear," unless it refer to my practice of hugging.

That I—I who have sworn the sex—was there not cause?—should fall a captive once again, allow myself to be bound in veriest chains, so fragile that but a movement of my little finger would suffice to break them, yet wound around me till I am held more firmly than in fetters forged of steel.

Yet so it is, and so far from resisting I surrender myself without an effort to escape my fate.

And who my conqueror?

A little witch scarce four years old. A golden-haired, large-eyed damsel who makes sport of me, who bends me to her puny will till I am forced to follow when she beckons, to go when she commands, to sprawl in undignified attitudes upon the lawn while I am pelted with leaves, to allow twigs, wisps of straw, or any other rubbish to be stuck in my hair till I look like Tom o' Bedlam, and wonder when the keepers will arrive with that straight jacket in which I certainly must find myself ere long.

"Excellent wench! Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee," I spout, and Rosie, that is her name—odd, is it not, that anyone bearing it can have a charm for me?—and Rosie, nowise abashed by this passionate declaration, calmly ignores it, and says:

"Tate me for a wart, Hally."

At least, that is what it sounds like. But I am a good linguist, and generally contrived, even among the savage tribes, to pick up enough of their vocabulary to make myself understood and understand them.

Perhaps this experience has, something to do with my quick comprehension of Rosie's language. The lower the civilisation the more limited the power of expression. So with

children, and I answer, with assured readiness:

"Take you for a walk, your royal highness? Certainly. Whither is it your pleasure to walk? Speak, your slave hears but to obey."

Rosie looks at me with grave, solemn eyes, and repeats:

"Tate me a wart down teet."

And "down street" accordingly I conduct her, where is a wondrous window, behind which lie open books with gorgeously painted pictures. On these she feasts her eyes, and points with an imperious gesture to the one which she is desirous of adding to her already plentiful stock at home; but Rosie is insatiable in the matter of pictures.

We enter the little shop together. Mrs. Musgrave is there, matching some wools, and smiles faintly when she sees us.

"You spoil that child, Mr. Cardonnel," she says. "Why do you let her plague you so?"

"She's spoiling me, I think," I answer, with a grimace which has something of pain behind it, "spoiling me for the lonely life I shall lead when I go away."

Mrs. Musgrave opens her lips as if about to speak, but closes them again and is mute. She is generally so before me—evidently a woman of most nervous temperament—but I don't mind her shyness now, I have got used to it, and though I certainly can't see any earthly reason why Oliver should rave about her in such an insane fashion as he does, I have learned to like and to respect my friend's wife, though she is a woman.

She goes on comparing the shades of wool, and I return to my allegiance, who has, meanwhile, wandered from my side to the open door of the little back parlour behind the shop and stands staring intently in, one dimpled finger in her rosetube of a mouth.

"She sees the parrot, ma'am," explains Dame Hobson, who keeps the little general shop which is all that Hylsbroke boasts. "My nephew as come back last week from Injy brought it a present for me. And she is such a talker, you wouldn't believe. Lor! how that bird do go on when she's once started, and that sensible as one would think she understands every word she says. Come in and look at the pretty bird, Miss Rosie."

And she takes the child's hand and leads her into the room before the cage, whose inmate arches its neck, draws back its head, and half opens its wings, and then, in the usual shrill tones, enunciates:

"Pretty Polly."

"Of course," I laugh—here is an opportunity of showing that I can still utter a cheap cynicism—"it must be a she; the female vanity asserts itself, and—"

I stop short, for Mrs. Musgrave is swaying to and fro, and subsides into a chair which stands beside her. Her face is white as death. I look at her in wonderment one moment, with I know not what feeling the next, as her eyes meet mine with a look of ghastly terror, the while the bird repeats over and over again, in tones cooing, coquettish, and shrill:

"Pret—pretty Polly, pr-r-retty Polly."

CHAPTER III.

MY FRIEND'S WIFE.

Now, am I not right to trust in none? Does common honesty dwell in the breast of any woman in the world? A man like Oliver, too, simple and guileless as an infant, loving, trustful. And how is his trust repaid? With basest treachery, with black deceit; and shall I—who call myself his friend—shall I assist in duping him? Shall I see him befuddled and hold my peace? By Heaven, no, not though he slay me for telling him the truth.

So I soliloquise as I stride fiercely onward, over fields yellow with ripe corn through which I thread my way, reckless of what damage I am doing, by green hedgerows and soft-tufted glades, anywhere, so that I may be alone where

I can think out the problem that is before me.

For it is a problem, and most hard to solve.

She betrayed herself. I had no thought—not the most remote—of her identity. So many years had passed—I had really noticed her so little—that I might have ended my visit, have come and gone again and again, and never entertained the least suspicion. That cursed bird, with its semi-human speech, unnerved her. Why was I there? Why, why—ah, why?

I could wish it otherwise, but Fate has willed that I, who have suffered so much and know what suffering means, must be the instrument to bring woe even greater than mine own upon the man whom I hold dearest in the world.

For, I tell myself, truth, justice, honour, all require that I shall speak out what I know. If there was room for doubt, if I only suspected, I would seek to learn no further, I would go, go at once, and avoid possible confirmation; but—I am certain.

"Oh, Iago! the pity of it," I cry, echoing the Moor's lamentation with all my heart, yet am I certain that no other course is open to me than the one.

Though it makes wreck of all his life, Oliver must know, and from my lips, that which I have discovered. He will hate me for telling him the truth, but it must be done.

And even as I so determine Pretty Polly stands before me. Her features are set and rigid, her lips are pale, so pale her whole appearance speaks eloquently of despair, yet do I not relent, but gaze unpitifully upon her.

She speaks in a low, monotonous tone, drearily sad, and I listen in stony silence.

"The worst of criminals may speak in their defence," she says. "You have constituted yourself my judge; I claim a hearing."

My only answer is a sullen bow. I am resolved she shall not move me, but I recognise the justice of her demand, and she goes on.

"I am not going to plead for your forbearance," she continues; "that will not serve me, I know. I only want you to understand how I came into this position."

"Go on," I answer, coldly.

"When we parted so long ago I told you what was my intention. I fulfilled it to the letter. Since that day my life has been without reproach. How hard it was at first I need not tell you, but I was firm in my resolve, and never looked back. I need not enter into details; it would be too long a story."

"Which you might find it difficult to invent as you go on without some contradictions. I understand," I say, with a mocking smile. "Come to the point, Mrs. Musgrave. I suppose I must call you by that name."

"It cannot be taken from me—he—he cannot be released unless—I unless I go back to the life of sin I thought I had quitted for ever. I might do that for his dear sake—to set him free. Oh, man, man, have you no pity?" she cries, in accents that bear the ring of anguish. "I withstood the temptation so long, for I loved him—I loved him, I tell you, and I could not bear the thought of deceiving him."

"And yet you have deceived him."

"This, I think, is unanswerable, but she has more to say.

"Because to have told him I was unworthy of the great love he gave me, and why, would have broken his honest heart. Ay, you may sneer, Harold Cardonnel, and say—as I know you do to yourself—that I thought more of myself than him. I tell you it was not so. I would have died, willingly died, to save him pain."

She certainly is either a very clever actress, or she means what she says. Which is it?

I wish I knew, and yet to what end? Have I not made up my mind, and does she not see that it is so?

Apparently, for she pleads no longer.

"I have not said all I meant," she goes on, drearily. "But what of that? You are pitiless, without mercy. Well, be it so. How long reprieve do you give me?"

I consider a moment before answering, then I say:

"I shall be back this evening in time to dress for dinner. Should I go straight to my room and ask you to excuse me on the plea of a headache I shall expect to hear to-morrow morning that you have gone to do some shopping at Newton, from whence you can easily get a train to London. You understand me?"

"Perfectly." Her lips quiver a little as she speaks the word, but no other sign of emotion is visible. "One other question. Should you have no—headache?"

"Ah! who can tell what a day will bring forth?"

I bow to signify that I have said all I mean to say for the present, and like a ghost she glides away and I am alone once more.

Am I shaken, I wonder? Not by any plea she has advanced, most certainly. In point of fact, now I come to think of it, she has urged absolutely nothing. Our conversation has been bald in the extreme. Only one thing I recognise, that whatever else she may be she is a brave woman, and yet one would hardly think it, looking upon her shrinking, retiring manner. I had expected tears, entreaties, but have been spared so much.

I turn my steps towards Hylsbroke. It is not an extensive village. Some five hundred souls, including the occupants of a dozen or more outlying farms, comprise its population. I am in a curious mood this afternoon; I thirst for gossip—I who detest gossip in a general way—and call at many places, where, curiously enough, one topic seems uppermost, the goodness and the virtues of my friend's wife. My last call is at The Rectory.

The rector himself greets me cordially. It is not often that upon his quiet retirement there comes one who has seen the world, and we pass a pleasant half-hour in desultory chat, while Mrs. Pembroke sits by and listens, evidently with the firm belief that her husband's share in it is most worthy of attention.

And here again very oddly Mrs. Musgrave's name crops up.

"The best little woman I ever met in my life," enthusiastically exclaims the rector. "Always excepting one," he hastens to add, as Mrs. Pembroke bristles a little, but simmers down when this amend is spoken. "It was a bad day for our school when Musgrave carried her away from it. Which he never would have done but for my wife here, I verily believe."

"Indeed!" observe I. "You then," addressing Mrs. Pembroke politely, "thought her worthy a good man's honest affection?"

"Well, I certainly did think that Dr. Musgrave might have looked higher than a village school-mistress for a wife," the good lady replies. "But she was a dear, good girl"—I smother a groan—"and I've never repented advising her—after she had refused him again and again to my certain knowledge without any conceivable reason—to make the poor fellow happy."

"And you think she has done that?"

Mrs. Pembroke annihilates me with a look of mild contempt.

"Think!" she repeats. "I know it, Mr. Cardonnel. He doats upon her."

So it is the same tale everywhere, with only the slightest variations. I rise and take my leave, which must be my farewell too, I add, as I am returning to town to-morrow. Courteous regrets are uttered, and the hope expressed that I may visit Hylsbroke again. I answer vaguely that it may be so, and bow myself out.

I enter the gate. Across the lawn a little fairy figure comes bounding to meet me. I raise it in my arms, and with Rosie's chubby little arms twined round my neck, her lips babbling close to my ears, I approach a window behind which I see a white, drawn face with eyes that pierce me through with an intense gaze.

"Now, Mrs. Musgrave, madam," I shout, in a boisterous tone, "I hope there's a good substantial cut-and-come-again joint nearly ready to go on the table. I've been rambling all day, and have brought back an appetite with me, I assure you."

I am inside now; she essays to speak, to

answer me, but fails. She is not made of iron, and presently I have hastily deposited Rosie on the floor and am stooping over a huddled heap of clothes from somewhere about which come sounds of choking, gasping sobs.

I have not forgotten all relating to my profession—it will be hysterics presently, I know, unless I take prompt measures.

I shake the prostrate form.

"Don't be a fool," I say, roughly, "Oliver is coming."

I speak truly; his swinging step sounds on the road; another minute and he will be in the room. I hurry her to the door.

"Go upstairs at once, change your dress, and come down your own self," I say, sharply. "I will keep him here for a little while."

She checks her sobs. I say again she is a brave little woman.

"God bless you!" she murmurs.

And then she flies out of the room, but I feel guiltily ashamed when Oliver comes in through the window a moment later on, for I can still feel the print of a warm kiss upon my hand.

"Hallo, you two flirting again!" exclaims Oliver, as Rosie springs from my side to his.

And then he laughs, and I join him. I don't know how I manage it, but I do, and by-and-bye we both go up to wash our hands—evening dress is not in Oliver Musgrave's modest household—and meet again at the dinner table.

It is my last meal with them, for the next morning I am flying back to London, with a knowledge locked within my breast that I would rather be without, but which henceforth will remain there never to be spoken of.

Am I a coward, a weak, unmanly fool? I have ceased to ask myself that question, and am content to know that I have no qualms of conscience.

"Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise." And Oliver Musgrave sleeps all the sounder, enjoys his simple, useful life so much the more that he is ignorant that the woman who bears his name was one time known as "Pretty Polly."

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

A BALLOON DUEL.—Perhaps the most remarkable duel ever fought took place in 1808. It could only have occurred in French society. M. de Grandpré and M. le Pique had a quarrel, arising out of jealousy concerning a lady engaged at the Imperial Opera, one Mademoiselle TREVIT. They agreed to fight a duel to settle their respective claims; and in order that the heat of angry passion should not interfere with the elegance of the proceeding, they postponed the duel for a month, the lady agreeing to bestow her smiles on the survivor; or at least this was inferred. The duellists were to fight in the air. Two balloons were constructed precisely alike. On the day indicated, De Grandpré and his second entered the car of one balloon, Le Pique and his second that of the other; it was in the garden of the Tuileries, amid an immense concourse of spectators. The gentlemen were to fire, not at each other, but at each other's balloons, in order to bring them down by the escape of gas; and as pistols might hardly have served the purpose each aeronaut took a blunderbuss in his car. At a given signal the ropes that retained the cars were cut, and the balloons ascended. The wind was moderate, and kept the balloons at about their original distance of eighty yards apart. When about half a mile above the surface of the earth a preconcerted signal for firing was given. M. le Pique fired, but missed. M. de Grandpré fired, and sent a ball through Pique's balloon. The balloon collapsed, the car descended with frightful rapidity, and Le Pique and his second were dashed to pieces! De Grandpré continued his

ascent triumphantly, and terminated his aerial voyage successfully at a distance of seven leagues from Paris!

JOHN WESLEY.—It would be difficult to find in the whole circle of biography a man who worked harder and longer than Wesley. Not an hour did he leave unappropriated. For fifty years he rose at four in the morning, summer and winter, and was accustomed to preach a sermon at five, an exercise he esteemed the healthiest in the world. "Though I am always in haste," he says of himself, "I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake any more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit. It is true I travel 4,000 or 5,000 miles in a year, but I generally travel alone in my carriage, and am as retired ten hours a day as if I were in a wilderness." In this way he found time to read much and to write voluminously. In eating and drinking he was very abstemious. Suppers he abhorred, and sometimes for years he never tasted animal food. Once for three or four years he lived chiefly on potatoes. From wine, beer and spirits he habitually abstained, preferring water. Throughout his long life he enjoyed nearly uninterrupted health. He could sleep at will, and he owns that he never lost a night's sleep from his childhood. His fine health he attributed to his regular habits, his temperance, and to the frequent changes of air he experienced in travelling; also to his serene temper; he had a thousand cares resting upon him, but they never worried him. "I feel and grieve," he wrote "but I fret at nothing." From his youth up he lived on a trifle yearly, giving away the rest in alms and charities. And, though thousands passed through his hands, he died without twenty pounds in the world. It is said that in the course of his life he gave away not less than £30,000. This great sum was chiefly derived from the sale of his writings. He was his own printer and bookseller, and managed his trade with economy and success. His charities were wholly unostentatious, were practical, and were administered commonly by his own kindly hand. Wesley was a noble and a great man; and Lord Macaulay judges that in statesmanlike capacity he was not inferior to Richelieu.

AN ECCENTRIC JUDGE.—In May, 1718, Sir Francis Paget, a remarkable legal character, was created a baron of the Exchequer. He was the son of the vicar of Bloxham, in Oxfordshire, and bred to the law, but possessing few requisites for the profession, he pushed his interest by writing political pamphlets, which were received with attention in the proper quarters, so that he was called to the coif in 1704, and became king's serjeant in 1714-15. His language was mean and tautologous. In a charge to the grand jury at the assizes he said: "Gentlemen of the jury, you ought to inquire after recusants in that kind, and such as do not frequent the church in that kind; but above all, such as haunt alehouses in that kind; drunkards and blasphemers in that kind, and all notorious offenders in that kind, are to be presented in that kind, and as the laws in that kind direct, must be proceeded against in that kind." To the grand jury of Middlesex, in May, 1736, he began his charge: "I dare venture to affirm, gentlemen, on my own knowledge, that England never was so happy both at home and abroad as it now is." It was said of him that he was a judge without mercy and a gentleman without manners. He rendered his name odious by a dreadful severity, and was popularly known as "the hanging judge." He indulged in making doggerel rhymes on those he knew. In a cause at Dorchester, treating one King, a Thatcher, with his usual rigour, the man retorted, after the trial was over:

"God, in his rage,
Made a Judge Page."

He was the judge who tried Savage the poet on a charge of murder, and was so anxious to convict him that he was afterwards brought to confess that he had been particularly severe. When old and decrepit, as he passed along from court, a gentleman inquired particularly of the state of his health. "My dear sir," he replied

"you see I keep hanging on, hanging on." This disgrace to the bench outlived all his ermined brethren, and died unlamented in December, 1741, at the age of eighty.

STORY OF A TOAD.—The following is taken from Mackenzie's History of Newcastle: In 1793 Mr. George Wilson, a mason, met with a toad, which he most wantonly and cruelly immured in a stone wall that he was then building. In the middle of the wall he made a close cell of lime and stone, just fit for the magnitude of its body, and seemingly so closely plastered as to prevent the admission of air. In 1809, sixteen years afterwards, it was found necessary to open a gap in this wall, for a passage for carts, when the poor creature was found alive in its prison. It seemed at first in a very torpid state, but it soon recovered animation and activity; and, as if sensible of the blessings of freedom, made its way to a collection of stones, and disappeared.

A SAD STORY.—In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May, 1799, mention is made of the death of James White, who besides several translations, was author of various interesting historical novels and some pleasing poetic pieces. He was educated at the University of Dublin, and was esteemed an admirable scholar, with brilliant talents. For four or five years before his decease he was very distressed and eccentric. He had conceived an ardent affection for a beautiful girl who, he erroneously supposed, was as warmly attached to him. Some plot, he imagined, had been contrived to wean her regard, and he attributed failures of his application for patronage and employment from the great to secret machinations. He supposed this influence prevailed with the London booksellers to prevent his literary labours from being duly rewarded. He passed the winters of 1797 and 1798 in the neighbourhood of Bath; and was often noticed in the pump room, and in the streets or vicinity of the city, thin, pale, and emaciated, with a wild, penetrating look. He was known to have been without animal food for several months, and to have supported life by a meal of biscuits, a piece of bread, or a cold potato with a glass of water. Unable to pay his lodgings, and too proud to ask relief, he wandered about the fields at night, or slept beneath a haystack. Once, when almost exhausted, he took refuge at an inn in Bath, where by refusing sustenance he alarmed the mistress; she applied to the magistrate, and they consigned him to the parish officers. About this time he published "Letters to Lord Camden on the state of Ireland," which were admired for elegance and strength of language, shrewdness of remark, and perspicuity of argument. A small subscription was privately raised and delicately tendered to him. He received it as a loan, and left Bath. Poverty and sensitiveness deranged his mental powers. He could never labour corporeally nor attain to eminence nor even obtain sufficient for subsistence, by his pen, and he shrank from society, to suffer silently. At a little public house about six miles from Bath he was found dead in his bed—he perished in distraction and poverty of a broken heart.

THE MONTH OF JULY.—July was originally the fifth month of the Roman year, and thence denominated Quintilis. Its duration was limited to thirty-one days by Julius Cæsar, who felt a personal interest in it as his natal month. After the death of this great reformer of the calendar, Mark Antony changed the name to July in honour of the family name of Cæsar. Our Saxon ancestors called July Hay Month (says the antiquary Verstegan), "because therein they usually made their hay harvest, and also Maed Month, from the meads being then in their bloom."

EFFECT OF MUSIC ON ANIMALS.—A few years ago (we take this from a collection called "Omnia," done by Southey and Coleridge, London, 1812) some French philosophers made a concert for the national elephants, to try their taste for music. The same thing had been done forty years before them by John Wesley. "I thought," says he, "it would be worth while to make an odd experiment. Remembering how surprisingly fond of music the lion at Edinburgh

was, I determined to try whether this was the case with all animals of the same kind. I accordingly went to the Tower with one who plays on the German flute; he began playing near four or five lions; only one of these (the rest not seeming to regard it at all) rose up, came to the front of his den, and seemed to be all attention; meantime a tiger in the same den started up, leaped over the lion's back, turned and ran under his belly, leaped over him again, and so to and fro incessantly. Can we account for this? Where is the mystery? Animals are affected by music just as men are who know nothing of the theory, and, like men, some have musical ears and some have not. One dog will howl at a flute or trumpet, while another is perfectly indifferent to it. The remarkable effect sometimes produced by music on animals has certainly been known from time immemorial; the legend of Orpheus would not else have existed. The fact is applied to good purpose by the eastern snake-catchers.

THE DUKE OF ALVA.—There was a report that "the sun stood still at the battle of Wittenburg." The King of France asked Alva, who commanded the victorious army, whether it were true: his answer was, "Sir, I had too much to do upon earth to have any leisure for looking at heaven!"

SEA FIRES.—On the first of July, 949, a fire is said to have risen from the sea and consumed many towns on the coast of Spain. It travelled on into the interior, and continued its work, destroying many places entirely. . . . A similar phenomenon is said to have occurred in our own island in a much later age. In 1694 the country about Harlech, in Merionethshire, was annoyed about eight months by a fiery exhalation, that was seen only in the night, and consisted of a livid vapour, which rose from the sea, or seemed to come from Caernarvonshire, across a bay of the sea eight or nine miles broad on the west side. It spread from this bay over the land, and set fire to all the barns, stacks of hay and corn in its way. It also infected the air, and blasted the grass and herbage in such a manner that a great mortality of cattle, sheep, and horses ensued. It proceeded constantly to and from the same place, in stormy as well as in calm nights; but more frequently in the winter than in the following summer. It never fired anything but in the night, and the flames, which were weak and of a blueish colour, did no injury to human creatures; for the inhabitants did frequently rush into the middle of them, unhurt, to save their hay and corn. This vapour was at length extinguished by ringing bells, firing guns, blowing horns, and otherwise putting the air into motion whenever it was seen to approach the shore.—Entick's "Present State of the British Empire."

FEMALE HEAD DRESSES OF 1776.—On the 12th of July, 1776, Samuel Foote appeared at the Haymarket Theatre in the character of Lady Pentwistle, wearing one of the enormous female head-dresses which were then fashionable, not meaning, probably, anything so serious as the reform of an absurdity, but only to raise a laugh and bring an audience to his playhouse. The dress is stated to have been stuck full of feathers of an extravagant size; it extended a yard wide; and the whole fabric of feathers, hair, and wool dropped off his head as he left the stage. King George the Third and Queen Charlotte, who were present, laughed heartily at the exhibition. There are numerous representations to be met with and descriptions of the head-dress of that period. Sometimes it was remarkable for its lofty height; a pad or cushion being placed on the top of the head, and the hair combed up over it, and slightly confined in some way at the top. Frequently, however, this tower was bedizened in a most extravagant manner, necessarily causing it to be broad as well as high, and rendering the whole fabric a mass of absurdity. It was a mountain of wool, hair, powder, lawn, muslin, net, lace, gauzes, ribbon, flowers, feathers, and wire. Sometimes these varied materials were built up, tier after tier, like the successive stages of a pagoda.

ROYAL TOMBS.—The burial places of Kings are always famous. The oldest and greatest

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buildings on the earth are Tombs of Kings—the Pyramids. The most wonderful revelation of the life of the ancient world is that which is painted in the rock-hewn catacombs of the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings at Thebes. The burial of the Kings of Judah was a kind of canonization. These burial places, however, according to the universal practice of antiquity, were mostly outside the precincts of the towns. The sepulchre of the race of David within the city of Jerusalem formed a solitary exception. The Roman Emperors were interred first in the mausoleum of Augustus in the "Campus Martius," beyond the walls, then in the mausoleum of Hadrian, on the farther side of the Tiber. The burial of Geta at the foot of the Palatine Hill, and of Trajan at the base of his Column in the Forum which bears his name, were the first indications that the sanctity of the city might be invaded by the presence of imperial graves. It was reserved for Constantine the Great to give the earliest example of the interment of sovereigns, not only within the walls of a city, but within a sacred building, when he and his successors were laid in the "Church of the Apostles," at Constantinople. This precedent was from that time followed both in East and West, and every European nation has now its royal consecrated cemetery.—Dean Stanley's Memorials of Westminster Abbey.

AN OLD LADY.—In 1752, according to the "Gentleman's Magazine," was living at Cleehall, near Ludlow, in Salop, Lady Wadeley at the great age of 105. She had been blind for several years, but at that time could see remarkably well. She was then walking about in perfect health, and cutting a new set of teeth.

HOW WE POISON OURSELVES.

BERNARD, the great French toxicologist, made a series of experiments to illustrate, or rather to demonstrate, what bad air will do for us and what we can do with it. His object was not to prove that bad air was poison, but that it was a poison which we are able to take to a great and deleterious extent by gradual and continued doses. He proved it thus. He introduced a sparrow into a glass globe, all the apertures of which were hermetically sealed. The sparrow seemed lively enough for an hour, but then evidently suffered from the ill effects of breathing air that had already passed through its lungs. When a second hour had elapsed, Bernard introduced a second sparrow into the same globe. It seemed stunned, and in the lapse of a few minutes died. The original bird was left in for an hour longer, when it dropped and fell. It was taken out apparently dead, but under the influence of fresh air and sunshine recovered. M. Bernard, in the interests rather of science than of the sparrow, cruelly restored it to the globe, when almost instantly it tottered and died.

The application of this to the human subject is obvious enough. We are, at most English meetings and places of amusement, in the position of that first sparrow. We start with a fair field, and no favour. The gas is only lit just before the public are admitted; in the dining-room the windows have been open till the guests arrive. In both something like hermetical sealing takes place, and there is gradual asphyxiation. If it were sudden, people would die, as the second sparrow died; but being gradual, they get indurated like the first sparrow. They pant and gasp, and say the heat is intolerable, but they are able to stand it. It is not till the next morning that the headache asserts itself.

GOATS.

By the efforts of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts and others goat-keeping has recently received a considerable impetus in England. But although this is a subject for congratulation, when we are

pointed to the herds of goats upon the Continent as an example, it must not be forgotten that the circumstances are altogether different. Where there are large expanses of coarse and scanty herbage in mountainous districts, while flesh meat is far less in demand than milk and its products, the goat may thrive and pay better than any other animal. But in a cultivated country highly farmed, it cannot possibly compete with the milch-cow, which can be fattened and sold to the butcher when she ceases to be profitable at the pail.

To be brief, the quality of the flesh is an insuperable obstacle to the goat ever taking a place in England as regular dairy stock, while its destructive propensities are another very serious objection. The male kids must be eaten very young, or are not eatable at all; and the flesh of the female when past milking is practically of no value. Nevertheless it is possible that in some cases a few goats might be a profitable investment, apart from the mere cottager and villa resident, to whom the goat would often be a great help, but with whom we are not here concerned.

Whenever goats' milk is wanted, about half-a-crown per quart has generally to be paid for it; and as it is becoming more valued than formerly, there is a possible profit here. We do not of course mean that anyone could in the least depend on selling milk at that price; if it were so the case would be clear enough. But where there is likely to be any demand, inquiry might be worth while; and it is needless to say that a far less price would yield very great profit.

Again, while goats' milk makes bad butter, it makes excellent cheese; and it is just possible that it might answer to attempt imitation of the Roquefort and some other of the choicest kinds, which, it is well known, are made in part from goats' milk.

To wind a watch, turn the hole downwards, and let the small end of the key point upwards. This will allow any little particles of dirt, metal, or dust to drop out, and the watch will not need cleaning so often.

THE marriage of the Princess Victoria of Hesse with the Crown Prince of Sweden is fixed for September 20. The Queen of Sweden, the Crown Prince of Denmark, and about 60 royal personages are expected.

Big wreaths of real flowers suspended from the handles of parasols are worn in Paris by ultra-fashionables instead of the usual floral bouquets at the top of the sunshade.

INFORMATION has been received that the harbour light on Rocky Point, at the entrance to Harbour Breton, Fortune Bay, Newfoundland, has been burnt down. Steps will be taken to replace it as soon as possible.

AN association of ladies in Berlin, the "Clothing League for the Abolition of Petticoats," have held a meeting in favour of the adoption of "bifurcated garbmenture."

A MARTYR TO SCIENCE.—Sir Thomas Parkyns was fined by a Woolwich magistrate for running a steam engine, in the form of a tricycle, at the rate of five miles an hour on the public road. Sir Thomas appealed against this decision, but Lord Coleridge has confirmed it, upon the ground that a tricycle propelled by steam comes under the Locomotive Acts, and must be attended by three persons, not go more than two miles an hour, and have wheel tires of certain dimensions.

In London there are 12,000 licensed cab-drivers and 3,000 of these are total abstainers.

By order of the Postmaster-General, a number of female clerks will shortly be filled up by open competition.

WILLIAM CROWS, a gardener, Croydon, has died from the effect of a bee-sting behind the ear. Blood-poisoning supervened.

NEXT month and after the public will be admitted to the National Gallery on students' days, Thursdays and Fridays, at 11 instead of 12 o'clock, as of late.

OXFORD won the University cricket match at

Lord's by 135 runs. The dark blues have gained 22 matches as against 23 which stand to the credit of Cambridge.

ACCORDING to the latest Parliamentary return, 663 petitions, with 110,148 signatures, have been presented praying the House of Commons not to allow any alteration of the law with regard to the Parliamentary oath in favour of Mr. Bradlaugh. There have been 262 petitions, with 43,659 signatures, presented in favour of an alteration.

SIR EVELYN WOOD's new girl-baby cannot be said to be badly off in the matter of godmothers. The Queen is one, the Empress Eugénie is the other. The infant bears the name of "Victoria Eugénie."

MESSRS. SIEMENS, inspired by the success which has attended the opening of the electric railway near Berlin, now entertain the hope of being able to work the underground railways in London and that through the St. Gothard Tunnel by the same means.

MR. JAMES STANLEY, the inventor of the modern bicycle and tricycle, has died at Coventry. He was of humble origin, but of a keen, inventive mind. Early in the year he was at Osborne, the Queen having ordered one of these machines for the use of the Princesses. His magnum opus was the "Salvo-Quadricycle."

THE gradual change which is coming over the fashions was never so visible as at the last State Ball at Buckingham Palace. The first change which struck the visitor was the return of crinoline, at present modest and retiring enough to be sure, but already giving evidence of increasing pretensions. The present fashion is called a tournure, but the old remembrance of the appendage which in former times bore that name does not at all represent the actual mode. The tournure, adopted by many ladies of fashion at the last State Ball, consists of a series of steel bands of only a few inches in length at the waist, and widening to about two feet at the bottom of the skirt. The trained dresses were fewer in number than at the last ball, and in consequence of the resistance offered by the tournure were all made to throw easily over the arm. This movement is very graceful when gracefully executed, but great care must be taken not to draw the dress tight enough to lift the tournure sideways. The effect is then slovenly and awkward in the extreme, raising the under skirt above the ankles and giving a clumsiness to the turn in the waltz, which the high heels of the wearer increases to apparent vulgarity.

PLUMPNESS, such as would be considered exuberant in the cold and critical North of Europe, constitutes the popular ideal of female beauty in the Regency of Tunis. Among marriageable young ladies of that province slenderness of form and delicacy of proportion are regarded with justifiable aversion, as disqualifications for the wedded state. The fatter a maiden the better is her chance of making a good and early match. To be abnormally obese is to be certain of drawing a prize in the matrimonial market, and the loveliest litherness remains unwooded, while homely corpulence can pick and choose from among a throng of eligible suitors. How deep a root this predilection for capacious charms has struck in the Tunisian manly bosom may be gathered from the fact that widowers, desirous to marry again, should they haply, moved by family or pecuniary considerations, select a bride whose dimensions are reported to fall something short of those to which their previous experiences had accustomed them, are wont to send their "dear departed's" girdle and bracelet to the parents of their too exiguous betrothed. On receipt of these articles, conveying a delicate hint that it might be expedient to make up for Nature's shortcomings by some judicious treatment, the bride's papa and mamma proceed to fatten her with assiduity and despatch. For some weeks she leads the life of a Strasburg goose; and when she has attained the necessary goodly proportions, her nuptials are celebrated to the entire satisfaction of everybody concerned in them. Oil cake should be in great demand among "Parents and Guardians" at Tunis.



[AN UNEXPECTED DECLARATION.]

ELSIE'S WEAKNESS.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

ELSIE MANNERS had a weakness for making matches between her friends. Of course, immediately you conjure up a vision of a plotting, middle-aged lady, either wife or widow. In reality she was just six-and-twenty, but looked preposterously girlish, owing to her diminutive stature, her marvellously fair complexion, her eager, wondering blue eyes, and her sensitive, flexible mouth, which was yet full of character. But Miss Manners did her best to atone for what she considered these defects by wearing rich, heavy dresses of a sober hue, and being exceedingly dignified.

Miss Manners was an heiress and resided near Scarborough, and though numerous grand people lived about her or spent their summers there she was a sort of queen of the county in spite of her being unmarried. Her mother resided with her, but Elsie was rightfully and legally the mistress of the domain, for it had been bequeathed to her by a deceased uncle.

Elsie Manners had lived her romance long before, so long that she had outgrown the pain, though its effect showed plainly in all her views

and theories. She and handsome George Delancey had been lovers when she was a wife of six and he a winning, rebellious, tyrannical boy of sixteen.

Their birthdays both came on the twentieth of May, and when this day arrived that saw Elsie seventeen they were to have been married. But George Delancey was thrown out of his carriage on the road to the church and picked up dead.

No girl ever had a more fortunate escape. In spite of his charming traits he had crammed more wickedness into his brief life than the generality of men manage to commit in three-score and ten years.

When Elsie's despair was a month old, from three different sources came the first proofs of her lover's real character. In the satisfying herself that these were true she learned—as much as a young, innocent girl could learn—what his career had been. I do not tell you the stories, but I will tell you one thing; in every possible way she aided his victims—God bless her!

When she was nineteen she went out into the world again and assumed her place. The terrible tragedy which had desolated her girlhood gave her a sort of sanctity in the minds of all about. It came to be regarded as a settled thing that Miss Manners would never marry.

Somehow everybody appeared to look on her as a widow and think it right and natural she should have the freedom of one. Young girls always told her their secrets, masculine friends

confided in her, and altogether a stranger hearing her talked about would have supposed her to be fifty at least. There were plenty of men who had loved her, or knew they could have loved her, but one and all put the idea by as too insane even for contemplation.

She was a happy woman. She enjoyed life, liked gaiety, appreciated her vast fortune, and did great good with it, and besides was an earnest student. The real secret of her contentment lay in the fact that she was always occupied. So nine years had gone by—nine whole years—and Elsie's twenty-sixth birthday had come.

It was the loveliest weather imaginable, really seeming as if nature desired to contribute her quota towards rendering Miss Manners's fête a complete success. She always gave a fête on her birthday, and this one promised to exceed all former ones.

Yet only the night before the festivities narrowly escaped being turned into a season of mourning, and they would inevitably have been but for Mr. Conrad Levison's presence of mind.

Miss Manners and her guests, for her house was always full at this season, were spending the evening along with numerous other people at the dwelling of one of her neighbours. There were fire-works on the lawn, when some misdirected wheel or serpent sent a shower of sparks towards Miss Manners and ignited her dress.

Conrad Levison chanced to stand near her. He caught up a heavy shawl which some old lady had brought out and finding no excuse for wearing had flung over the back of a bench. Mr. Levison wrapped this about Miss Manners and extinguished the flames before anyone else had time hardly to see the accident.

Miss Manners escaped with only a burn on her left arm, and Mr. Levison with some scorches on his hands. But the incident rendered the birthday fête a more enthusiastic affair even than usual, and naturally people made a hero of Conrad Levison, a good deal to his annoyance.

By profession he was an artist, and beginning to be well known in his profession. He had lately returned from Italy, and had arrived at his cousin's on the day of the accident. Miss Manners had never met him, and as she had only reached the house a very short time previous to the disaster there had been no opportunity for the hostess to present these two to each other.

Nor did any introduction give an opportunity for Miss Manners to express her gratitude, for Mr. Levison disappeared before the excitement subsided and did not make his appearance again.

He had been included in his host's invitation to the birthday fête, and in the morning it seemed to Miss Manners only fitting that she should write a note to her friend, Mrs. Hastings, saying how deeply thankful she felt, and hoping that Mr. Levison's injuries would not prevent his giving her the pleasure of seeing him.

Miss Manners was already the possessor of two of Conrad's pictures, for she entertained a great admiration for his genius, a firm belief in his future. She was prepared, too, personally to like him from many things which had been told her in regard to his generosity, his perseverance, the fortitude with which he had borne the reverses of fortune that had changed him from an amateur artist to a professional one.

It was to be expected that an acquaintance begun under such auspices would progress smoothly, and that Miss Manners should be more than ever prepossessed in his favour. But what helped them most was the fact that he seemed to avoid her at first, and Elsie, certain this arose from a wish to show her that he had no mind to overrate his service in her behalf, liked him the better for this delicacy.

Even while writing her note on the day of the fête her gratitude roused those match-making proclivities which were so strong in her. It occurred to her that it would be a most delightful thing if he and May Gifford could be brought together.

May Gifford was a distant relative and protégée, on whom it was known Miss Manners

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meant to bestow a goodly marriage portion, a clever, pretty, charming girl of nineteen. Elsie wrote to her also, telling her how much she regretted that a sister's illness had forced her to put off her visit, but adding that she should expect her the next month.

She spoke very slightly of her accident, and said little about Mr. Levison, but the more she thought the more convinced she became that her cousin and the artist would be beguiled into a romance that should lead to love and matrimony.

But two whole months elapsed before Miss Gifford came, and Elsie and Levison had grown warm friends in the meantime. She had long been promising her portrait to her old friend, Mrs. Phillips, and Conrad painted it, and the many hours thus spent together proved to Miss Manners that her first impressions had been justly founded.

After all May Gifford arrived unexpectedly. She found Elsie and Levison in the painting-room, whither she went at once.

"But I am not satisfied," he was saying, as he laid down his palette and looked from the original to the portrait and back again to her, shaking his head the while. "There is something wanting. It is a fair likeness if you will, but there's an expression I have not caught—however, there's one comfort, I don't believe anybody else could."

"I am glad it is a comfort," returned Miss Manners, laughing; "but it is a very poor compliment to so good a sitter as I flatter myself I have proved."

"That is just the trouble—you have not been at all a good sitter," he cried, laughing too. "But I suppose it is not your fault that your face declines to retain the same expression for two consecutive minutes."

"Then you can't blame me," she said.

"I cannot imagine any human being blaming you for anything," replied Levison, so eagerly that he was startled by the sound of his own voice, and feared he had betrayed himself.

Just then the door opened. Levison was standing with his back towards it, bending over his paint-box by way of giving himself something to do, while wondering if Miss Manners had observed the eagerness of his tone, half-afraid, half-hoping that she might have done so.

"Why, May!" he heard her exclaim, and turning round he saw her exchanging warm greetings with an exceedingly pretty girl.

It would have been plain to anybody who looked at him that he recognised the newcomer, and that the surprise in his face was mingled with a certain sensation of embarrassment.

"You see I have got here at last, Elsie," said Miss Gifford, bestowing another kiss upon her cousin.

"I had given you up until next week. I am so glad to see you!" cried Miss Manners. "I've had no letter or telegram, and there was no one to meet you at the station. What an inhospitable creature you must have thought me."

"Oh, I didn't send any message. I wanted to take you by surprise," Miss Gifford answered.

Suddenly Miss Manners remembered the artist. The room was very large, and he was standing near the farther end.

"Mr. Levison," she called, "come here and let me present you to my cousin, Miss Gifford."

He came forward in obedience to her command. May turned quickly as Elsie uttered his name. Something in both faces showed Miss Manners that her introduction was superfluous. It seemed to her that the rose-tints deepened in May's cheeks, and that Mr. Levison looked very odd. But their mutual embarrassment, if embarrassment it was, passed quickly. May held out her hand as he approached and said:

"How do you do, Mr. Levison? This is a great surprise. I did not dream of seeing you here."

"An equal surprise to me," he answered. "I need not tell you what a pleasure it is."

"Oh, no, we will let each other take all that for granted," rejoined Miss Gifford, laughing.

But was not her laugh a little constrained? So, at least, thought Miss Manners. Then the pair shook hands, and Mrs. Manners, who had come in, said:

"So you and May are old acquaintances, Mr. Levison?"

"Unless she decides to ignore me," he replied, gaily.

"Why, you never told us you knew May, Mr. Levison," added the old lady.

"Then it seems he wished to ignore me," said Miss Gifford.

"But I never heard Miss Gifford's name mentioned," he rejoined.

"Ah, aunt, that doesn't speak very well for you and Elsie," cried May. "Please account for that fact, you very naughty cousin."

"I can only say that Mr. Levison hides his deafness well," returned Miss Manners. "But deaf he must be if he has not heard us wonder twenty times a day during the last fortnight whether you ever meant to come."

"Certainly, I have heard you talk about your cousin," replied Levison; "but you never told me it was Miss Gifford."

"And you asked no questions, in order to prove that men are free from curiosity," observed May. "Oh, there is your portrait, Elsie!" she continued, hurrying towards the easel. "What an excellent likeness. I congratulate you on your success, Mr. Levison. Nobody has ever succeeded so well with her before."

"Mr. Levison was just maligning me, saying I was not a good sitter, when you came in," Elsie averred.

"Oh, no. Only abusing my own efforts," amended Levison. "So you really like it, Miss Gifford?"

"Why, it is perfect—the best portrait I have ever seen of yours," that young lady answered.

And Miss Manners fell to wondering where her cousin had seen others of his handiwork, and then wondered at herself for not putting the question outright, but still did not do so.

They talked for a few moments about the picture. Then some remark in regard to Miss Gifford's journey caused Elsie to say:

"You must want something to eat, child. Luckily luncheon is nearly ready."

"I think I want to wash my face most of anything," said her cousin. "I've an idea I must look rather like a soiled rag-doll at this present."

"Oh, very like," cried Elsie, wheeling her round so that she could see her reflection in a mirror, where she looked as fresh and dainty as if she had just left her dressing-room.

"Well, I'm not so bad as I thought," said May, complacently. Then she added, "Still, bad enough. And now I know why an old maid in the railway carriage glared at me so during the last hour, and asked at least forty times if I wasn't terribly warm and hadn't the headache."

"She was vexed because you seemed cool and comfortable," returned Elsie. "Only we oughtn't to admit before any man that our sex is capable of such weakness."

"Oh, there is no danger of contaminating Mr. Levison's ideas—he is a hopeless misanthrope and misogynist already," said Miss Gifford, laughing.

"That is a phase of character you have hidden from us, Mr. Levison," said Elsie.

"It is a very wicked slander," he replied, joining in their laughter.

But it seemed to Miss Manners that he was slightly annoyed, and that May's speech had a bitter ring, playfully as she spoke.

After a little he took his leave, declining Miss Manners's invitation to stop to luncheon on the plea that he had promised Mrs. Hastings to be at home by half-past one and help her entertain some visitors.

When he had gone the two young ladies went up to May's room to indulge in a few confidences while Miss Gifford dressed. They talked very fast about all sorts of things and people except Mr. Levison; but just as they were ready to descend the stairs, in obedience to a summons to luncheon, Miss Manners said:

"How odd you and Mr. Levison should know each other."

"Odd?" repeated May. "Why, very natural, since we were both in Rome at the same time last year and mutual friends."

"Well, I didn't mean your knowing him was odd, but I never heard you mention him."

"Haven't you? Nothing brought his name up, I suppose."

"But certainly I wrote you about my narrow escape from being burned to death."

"Oh, no. You wrote me a spark caught your dress and somebody put it out. I could not decipher the name, and when I asked in my next letter you forgot to answer."

In the evening a party of the neighbours came in, Mr. Levison among them, and it was not until late, when she found herself alone in her own room, that Elsie had leisure to sit down and hold communion with herself.

She discovered, and was astonished thereat, that for weeks and weeks she had completely put by—ignored—yes, forgotten her plan in regard to Mr. Levison and her cousin May. She marvelled now how she could have done so, since intimate acquaintance with him had more than borne out her first enthusiastic judgment. He was not only a genius in his profession, he was one of the most brilliant men, socially, she had ever known.

Nay! he possessed something higher even than all these enviable qualities; he was a thoroughly kind, generous, noble man.

And now it appeared that he and May knew each other—in fact, were more than mere acquaintances. It seemed as if there had been a difficulty or misunderstanding between them, and that both were a little ill at ease when together, a little inclined to be bitter and cynical, as young people often were when they had a wound somewhere down in their hearts, or a memory which troubled the nerves by its aching.

Immediately Elsie began, as she was fond of doing, to regard herself as an elderly person and study matters by the light of experience and a perfectly calm, unbiassed judgment.

Odd! She felt strangely restless to-night, and could not summon up that composure, that sense of having done with youth and its feverish impulses, of being a mere looker-on in the game of existence except when called upon to play the part of aiding and setting youthful lovers right, to which she was accustomed.

Something away down in her own heart ached. Some voice in her soul cried out with eager longing.

She shrank as if somewhere under the recesses of her being there lurked a secret which she dared not contemplate. Recollections of her girlhood came up—her girlhood which had wasted its treasures of love upon an unworthy object—had worshiped an idol of clay, and obstinately believed it a heaven-born deity.

In the storm and the night which followed she had worn out the last remains of youth so completely that always since life had looked dreary and monotonous, strive as she might to fill it with duties and pleasures.

But these were all foolish thoughts. She was in a bad mood, and had better put reflection by until a night's sleep had restored her nerves to their usual tone.

The next morning she was quite herself again, able to contemplate the work she had in hand—that of discovering if some estrangement existed between May and Levison—and if her suspicion proved correct of finding means to remove it.

During the ensuing fortnight she fully decided that her theory had a foundation; these young people had been lovers; some trouble had arisen; and now they gazed at each other across a gulf of misunderstanding, which would gradually widen unless some skilful hand bridged it over.

The weeks flew by, the summer passed, autumn came. May was to spend the winter with her cousin in town. Mr. Levison went away for a while, and came back. The relations between him and May were not satisfactory to Elsie.

Sometimes for days she gave up the idea that

either cared. Sometimes she believed that if only the matter could be rightly managed they might be brought together.

As for herself, she had grown capricious and variable in her moods. There were moments, the first she had ever known, when she grew angry and sore that she should have exhausted her powers of love so early, so utterly wasted them.

Other women at her age had their whole life before them fresh and beautiful, while she had no future. Life looked cold and blank. It was well and right to live a great deal for one's kind, but the human element craved for some personal happiness, and destiny gave her none. In other moods she suffered keen remorse for having permitted such vain, weak regrets. She was a much poorer creature, she told herself, than she had believed.

Positively she was envious and jealous of young people who had so many hopes and aspirations, and dismally ashamed and conscience-stricken she became.

Then one dreadful night she made a new discovery. She learned what ailed her! This heart which she had thought cold and dead had gone out toward Conrad Levison. It appeared incredible, but it was true. She felt as wicked as if convicted of having committed a great crime.

It seemed to her that no past suffering had ever equalled the misery of this vigil.

The next morning early she received a note from Levison, in which he asked to see her alone. She knew what he wanted. He was coming at last to tell her the whole truth and ask for her assistance.

He could bear his suspense no longer. If May had any remnant of affection left for him he must discover it, and he desired her, Elsie, to help him.

And she would—yes, heartily, gladly! She rejoiced that the message had come at this precise moment, for she deserved to be punished for her folly, and May had gone to sit in her aunt's room. So as the hour approached for Levison's arrival Elsie was left alone.

She retired to the library and sat down. She had not long to wait. He was shown in presently. She saw him walking quickly towards her. But it seemed as if a mist veiled her sight, through which she beheld him only dimly. She felt cold, as if her life was slowly freezing out.

He was beside her. She could see how pale and agitated he looked. He did not extend his hand. He did not even wait for any ceremony of greeting, but he cried out, abruptly:

"I suppose you will think me the most audacious of men when I tell you why I have come. But I could not wait any longer. I think I should have gone mad!"

She regarded him with a smile. Still that mist hovered before her eyes. Still the cold, cold weight pressed down upon her heart.

"I am not likely to think anything of you but what is pleasant," she said. "I am glad you have come. Tell me what you want to say."

He gazed at her with a sudden incredulous joy in his face. His eyes were fairly wild with an expression like that of a man doomed to death who has suddenly heard that a respite has been granted.

"Do you know—can you guess why I came?" he stammered.

"I know," she answered. "I am not blind. My dear friend, I believe that it will be easy to make everything clear and plain. Only be quite frank. Tell me the whole."

"Oh!" he cried, in a tone of ecstasy—stopped—stared at her anew, and exclaimed:

"I can't believe it yet—I don't dare! I feel as if I must be dreaming! Oh, is it true—can I hope?"

"Should I speak as I am doing if you could not?" returned she.

Then, to her utter bewilderment, he fell at her feet, seized her two hands, and kissed them passionately, crying:

"My love, my darling! Oh, it seems too good to be true! Elsie, Elsie, you knew that I loved

you. You care—you do care? Tell me. I can't believe it till I hear it from your lips—"

But she sank back in her chair so white and wan that he nearly went out of his senses with fright, and called upon her in piteous misery to tell him what this meant. Then she heard herself murmur:

"May—I thought it was May—you cared for!"

"But May is engaged to Harry Travers. I have known it a long while. She would not tell you—for she knew you were a little prejudiced against him—until he had proved, by his energy in his profession, that he was worthy of her—but he is—he's a splendid fellow! But, oh, never mind them now—Elsie, my love, my beautiful—is it true—can you care?"

So a few weeks later the whole neighbourhood was more astonished than it had been in years. But when people recovered their wits, most persons were charmed, though there were of course certain old dowagers who felt indignant, and who thought that if Miss Manners married she ought to have married one of their own sons.

Elsie herself at first felt a little ashamed of her own inconsistency, as she called it—then grateful that the blank in her life should be filled—the desert became a blooming garden!

She soon accepted her great happiness, as human beings do, as the most natural thing in the world, though her thankfulness did not lessen, and the present seemed always to grow brighter from its contrast to the dull, uneventful monotony of the past years.

HOW TO LEARN BOTANY.

BOTANY is usually regarded as a very dull and difficult study, even for advanced students, and of course quite too dry and hard for young children. This is all a mistake. Botany is really a most fascinating study for children or grown people. It is better adapted than almost any other to cultivate the very faculties which are not stimulated by other studies. The secret of success consists in making each student an independent explorer and discoverer. Taught by an enthusiastic teacher, botany awakens and strengthens powers of accurate observation, acute perception, and correct classification, such as are needed to make life useful and happy.

The study of botany may be commenced at any time. The best time is early spring. Suppose we start with a family of young people from seven years old to twenty. We meet every day. For our first lesson we study any plant, or part of a plant, that we have at hand. Each makes a sketch on paper, and writes a minute description of it. Then we put some seeds, or grains, such as beans, corn, oats, etc., in warm water to soak till the next day. At the second lesson we open some of these softened seeds, and observe their internal structure. The older and wiser ones tell the younger ones what they know about the seeds. Then we plant the remainder, some in earth and some between layers of damp cotton floating on a tumbler of water.

While waiting a few days for these to sprout, we bring up from the cellar onions, potatoes, celery, cabbages, etc. Each object is examined externally and internally, sketched and described in writing. Some of them are planted in earth and put in warm places, that we may study their growth.

Looking out of the windows, we examine each tree and shrub in sight, sketching and describing twig, branch, trunk, and bark and swelling bud. We cut cross sections, and compare them with cross sections of bamboo or palm stems, as seen in common fans. We cut vertical sections, and compare them with the wood used in making furniture. The flowers and plants in the window are sketched and described down to the most minute particulars.

Now we begin to study a book on botany. Our seeds are beginning to germinate and illustrate the first lessons, and our leader takes care that in all our course our investigations shall keep in

advance of our book lesson, that we may have the pleasure of making discoveries and finding them confirmed. Each day we recite something previously learned; find plants to illustrate it, and others to lead in the direction of the next lesson. Then taking some plant (if possible a complete one from root to flower and seed), we examine, sketch and describe it. Then turning to the analytical tables, we trace the description till we determine the species. We commit to memory and recite some of the distinguishing characteristics of the family, thus becoming so familiar with them that in future we need not go through with the tabular analysis.

We press and preserve specimens of all plants analysed. As often as possible we pursue our studies in the fields and woods. In each of these excursions we study one particular organ or part of a plant. Sometimes collecting the greatest possible variety of leaves, we sit down and compare the different forms. Sometimes we do the same with roots. Thus we learn a great deal about plants which we cannot analyse because some part is lacking.

In studying botany in the ordinary way very little enthusiasm is awakened; but studying it in the way described vastly more interest is excited and much more knowledge gained. A thousand beauties are discovered which the books pass over unnoticed. Any young person who has studied botany for a single season could conduct a class on the plan described.

It is a shame that country children should be allowed to grow up ignorant of natural objects around them. It is time that educated people, school boards, etc., should see that arithmetic and geography are not the only sciences worth studying. Agricultural societies would help to educate the young people if they would offer premiums for proficiency in natural science as well as manufactured articles.

MRS. MACKAY, wife of the "Bonanza King," has given £3,600 for a dinner service of 109 pieces, with a peagreen ground and birds designed by Buffon. The naturalist is said to have called it the *Sèvres* edition of his book on birds.

THE sale of Lord Beaconsfield's plate, china, and pictures is announced to take place at Christie and Manson's some time during the present summer season.

THE number of fourpenny bits in circulation is getting "smaller by degrees and beautifully less" decipherable. It is just twenty-five years since the last of these coins was turned out by the Mint authorities. No more will be issued. As against this some two millions of threepenny bits have been circulated within the last three years.

MR. FAWCETT is contemplating a wise alteration with reference to the registration of letters. Under the present arrangements the maximum liability of the postal authorities for letters lost during transit is £2; he proposes to increase it from sums varying from £5 to £20, upon payment of a twopenny registration fee.

NEGOTIATIONS are on foot with the Metropolitan Board of Works for the purchase by that Board of the intended Opera-house on the Embankment. The ground rent, amounting to £3,000 a year, has been punctually paid since the abandonment of the project which Mr. Mapleson undertook.

THE Horseshoe Fall at Niagara is to be lighted up by forty electric lamps of eight thousand candle-power. The fall will make its own electricity, and it will be the first time it has done a useful stroke of business.

THE Queen of the Sandwich Islands has her gowns made all in one piece, in the native style. But they are of blue velvet striped with gold, of peach pink with white jet, and of blue satin with crimson crushed roses. Slippers for her Majesty are made of the same material as the dresses.

SCARCELY could there be a cleverer stroke at wigs than that delivered by Clemens, of Alexandria. He informed the wearers that when they knelt at church to receive the benediction

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they must remember that the blessing remained on the wig and did not pass through to the head beneath.

STATISTICS.

GROWTH OF TIMBER.—As the result of observation, and from the testimony of reliable men, the following is about the average growth in twelve years of the leading desirable varieties of timber, when planted in belts or groves and cultivated: White maple, 1 foot in diameter and 30 feet high; ash, leaf maple or box elder, 1 foot in diameter and 20 feet high; white willow, one foot and a half in diameter and 50 feet high; yellow willow, one foot and a half in diameter and 35 feet high; Lombardy poplar, 10 inches in diameter and 40 feet high; blue and white ash, 10 inches in diameter and 25 feet high; black walnut and butternut, 10 inches in diameter and 20 feet high.

AGEAGE OF THE LONDON PARKS.—Hyde Park contains 380 acres; Kensington Gardens, 200; St. James's and the Green Parks together, 154; Regent's Park, 403; Victoria Park (before the late small addition), 280; Battersea Park, 174; Crystal Palace (as originally laid out 400 acres, reduced to), 168; Alexandra Park (as at first laid out 500 acres, reduced to), 192; Clapham Common, 190; Wandsworth, 302; Wimbledon, 628; Barnes, 120; Epping Forest, over 5,000; Kennington Park, 15; Camberwell, 5 acres.

COAL IN EGYPT.—Previous to 1876 there was hardly any importation of French coal into Egypt. What was sent was large coal of inferior quality to the English, and conglomerated coal was neglected. Since 1877, however, the French producers have been more alive to their interests in the matter. In 1878, 1879, and 1880, 54,000 tons of French coal entered the ports of Alexandria, Port Said, and Suez, and of this amount 34,000 tons were conglomerated. The latter (according to the French Consul at Alexandria) is better suited to the Egyptian market than large coal, especially for journeys into the interior. The buyers find it easier to carry, and less liable to yield fine debris. All the vessels conveying this fuel sailed from Marseilles, but their flags were foreign.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

INDIAN CHUPPATHEES.—Two pounds of flour, one ounce of butter, a pinch of salt. Rub together, and mix with a little cold water. Do not make it moist. Dip a cloth in hot water, and wrap it up for ten minutes; then knead it, and let it lie ten minutes more. Make it into balls the size of a walnut, roll it very thin, and bake in a hot oven. Prick them with a fork before putting them in.

FISH-PASH OR MUTTON.—Take any lean mutton, cut it in small pieces without any fat or gristle, boil it down into a nice broth. Then take out the meat. Wash a teaspoonful of rice nicely, and boil it for a little while in the broth, until it begins to look transparent. All grease to be skimmed off. Then take a mutton chop or two, take out the bone, cut in dice. Boil the whole together, with a whole onion and a little pepper and salt, for a quarter of an hour. Serve it without straining. The same receipt does for beef, chicken, turkey, or rabbit.

ANTI-FAT.

For those people whose enbonpoint is a matter of solicitude, whether because it is uncomfortable or unfashionable, the following diet is proposed by a doctor:

MAT EAT.—Lean mutton and beef, veal and lamb, soups not thickened, beef tea and broth; poultry, game, fish, and eggs; bread in moderation; greens, cresses, lettuce, etc.; green peas, cabbage, cauliflower, onions; fresh fruit without sugar.

MAY NOT EAT.—Fat meat, bacon or ham, butter, cream, sugar, potatoes, carrots, parsnips, rice, sago, tapioca, macaroni, custard, pastry and puddings, sweet cakes.

MAY DRINK.—Tea, coffee, cocoa from nibs, with milk, but no sugar; dry wines in moderation; brandy, whiskey, and gin in moderation without sugar; light bitter beer, soda, and seltzer water.

MAY NOT DRINK.—Milk, except sparingly; porter and stout, sweet ales, sweet wines. As a rule, alcoholic liquors should be taken sparingly, and never without food.

UNDER THE SUMMER SKIES.

GRANDMA sits by the window,
And looks with pensive eyes;
The birds are trilling softly,
There's a new moon in the skies.
Red roses bloom in the garden,
The vines creep over the wall,
And a girl leans over the gateway,
Like a lily, fair and tall.

And the girl is listening softly
To the man who is standing
there;
Grandma can see the blushes
That colour her cheek so fair.
She can guess the words he is
saying,
For her eyes the lashes hide,
And she wonders if he be worthy
The womanly feet to guide.

The twilight softly deepens—
The stars come out in the sky—
A night-bird, swooping darkly,
Gives out complaining cry.
The roses, heavy with sweetness,
Sway idly here and there,
The night is full of fragrance
Like Eden rich and rare.

The man goes on with his story,
While grandma listens and
waits;
And now she hears through the
darkness
The click of the garden gate.
Two forms come up the pathway,
Loitering, side by side,
And the roses are red with blushes
As he whispers, "My bonny
bride!"

The stars shine on together,
The moon lights up the west,
The winds are sighing softly,
The birds sleep in their nest.
And grandma murmurs a blessing,
Lifting her tear-dimmed eyes,
While the two hearts beat to-
gether
Under the summer skies. E. L.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE LATE G. W. MADDICK.—On the 6th instant an eventful life was brought to a close in the person of George William Maddick, well known in literary circles as the most prolific projector of periodical literature the world has ever seen. Upwards of forty such enterprises have owed their origin to his perspicacity, tact, and energy, and the working men of this country especially have reason to be grateful to one who by the creation of cheap technical journals rendered them inestimable service. The funeral took place at Highgate Cemetery. It is currently reported that the French Government has entered into a contract with an English firm for the supply of English and Irish horses for the French cavalry at an all

round price of £54 each. It is said that at this figure horses in large numbers are being bought throughout the United Kingdom for shipment to France.

A MEMBER of the House of Commons, who takes an intelligent interest in the vaccination question, is just now displaying it in a practical manner. As everyone knows, one of the great difficulties in the way of the spread of vaccination among the masses is the repulsion against the idea of being operated upon with vaccine taken from the human arm. If they knew the vaccine came direct from the calf, they say, they would not mind. Taking note of their prejudice the hon. member has gone into partnership with a friend, and triumphantly meets the difficulty. The friend finds the calf, the hon. member gives it house-room and fees a doctor, and day by day crowds of people come to be vaccinated, going away with their arm full of vaccine and their hearts full of satisfaction, having seen in the flesh the calf to which they are indebted.

A PROPOSITION, emanating from Mr. R. Wilson, of Salisbury Square, London, has been made regarding the advisability of taking the necessary steps for an International Exhibition of the Industries of all Nations, to be held in London at an early period. Mr. Wilson has, we are informed, communicated the project to Mr. Gladstone.

A CORRESPONDENT of a contemporary writes:—Mr. Gladstone has one of the biggest heads in England. Some time ago Mr. Tennyson and he had an argument whose head was the larger; they were measured, and the Laureate's head was found to be the wider, but Mr. Gladstone's the higher. It may be; yet there is nothing in it after all.

THE late Earl of Beaconsfield's will has now been proved by Sir Nathaniel Mayer de Rothschild and Sir Philip Rose, the executors, the probate being dated 29th ult. The gross amount of the personal estate is sworn to be £76,687 4s. 7d., and the net amount, after deducting debts and funeral expenses, £63,312 13s.

THE last idea in handkerchiefs is to surround them with a goffered frill, which peeps daintily out of the pocket.

A STATUE of Mr. Gladstone, executed by Mr. Albert Bruce Joy, will very shortly be sent to the foundry at Thames Ditton, and when cast in bronze will be set up at the East End of London. It is presented to the citizens of London by Mr. Theodore Bryant, of the firm of Bryant and May, and is over nine feet in height. Mr. Gladstone is represented standing in the act of delivering an address. The costume is ordinary morning dress with the addition of a loose overcoat thrown open in front.

MR. HOWARD PAUL says in his weekly budget to a contemporary:—In a residence of a quarter of a century in London, I have never known so many Americans in this country. I quite believe that 40,000 citizens of the United States will visit London this summer, and assuming that each person spends £50 in England, and I think this a moderate estimate, the neat little sum of £2,000,000 will have been disbursed to the profit of John Bull.

GENEVA, for the first time in its history, has had a race meeting. The sport included flat and hurdle races and a steeplechase, and the meeting has been so successful that it is intended to repeat it during the present season.

CURE FOR SMALL POX.—In corroboration of the information we gave our readers in No. 949 we publish the following. It comes all the way from Yokohama:—Permit me, also, to testify to the efficacy of cream of tartar in cases of small pox; the Mexicans use it, and I have administered it to several Chinese with extraordinary success. Take cream of tartar, ½ oz.; rhubarb, 12 grains; cold filtered water, 1 pint. Dose for grown-up person in severe cases, one half-pint every three or four hours; a child of ten about one-half the quantity. If fever has gone, dose every five or six hours. If bowels are relaxed, leave out the rhubarb. Dessert spoonful three times a day for children. One-half pint of cream of tartar, with water, taken by an adult, and a proportionate quantity for children, will prevent small pox if in the house.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS should in all cases furnish us with their names and addresses. Letters signed simply with initials or a nom de plume may not always receive immediate attention, as our space is limited. No charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

SUFFERER.—A cheap and effectual remedy for such unpleasant irritation of the skin would be found in a preparation called Webb's Embrocation. It is to be had of all chemists.

M. M. F.—For a greasy face, wash it with water slightly acidulated with lemon juice.

L. L. E.—Gold fish must be kept in a vessel of sufficient capacity, and be given fresh water every day. It is not good to feed them, as the food will only serve to render the water unfit for their existence, and if renewed every day, the water itself will furnish them with enough material for their sustenance.

G. D.—Castor oil and brandy will help the hair.

S. C.—Noise may be deadened by a number of simple contrivances. Rubber cushions under the legs of a workbench are an effective method of deadening noise, it being found, as stated, that in a certain factory the hammering of fifty coppersmiths was scarcely audible in the room below, their benches having under each leg a rubber cushion. Kegs of sand or sawdust applied in the same way afford similar immunity. A few inches of sand or sawdust being first poured into each keg, there is laid on it a board or block upon which the leg rests, and around the leg and block is poured fine dry sand or sawdust. By this simple means it is said, not only all noise, but a vibration and shock are so completely prevented that an ordinary anvil thus mounted may be used even in a dwelling house without annoying its occupants.

E. M. H.—Handwriting very good.

M. W.—To remove grease and dirt from cloth and woollen articles, place a cotton or woollen cloth, or a piece of blotting paper, under the article to be cleansed; then rub upon the spots some pure benzine, and the grease or dirt will disappear as if by magic. Be sure to place a cloth or blotting paper under the garment to be operated upon, otherwise a circular stain will remain, which cannot be removed. The benzine drives the grease through the article to be cleaned, and is absorbed by the cloth or blotting paper placed under it. After the spot is removed, continue to rub with a dry cloth until the benzine is evaporated. This also is done to avoid a stain.

B. L.—"Davy Jones" is a familiar name among sailors for Death. He was formerly identical in their minds with the evil spirit supposed to preside over the demons of the sea. He was thought to be in all storms, and was sometimes seen of gigantic height, showing three rows of sharp teeth in his enormous mouth, opening great frightful eyes, and nostrils which emitted blue flames. The ocean is still termed by sailors "Davy Jones's Locker."

F. S. S.—Glycerine and lemon juice will whiten and soften the skin.

E. P. N.—It has long been an open question as to who should bow first on meeting—the lady or the gentleman. Some authorities insist that a gentleman should not bow to a lady until she bows to him; others, that a gentleman should always bow first to a lady, no matter whether she returns it or not; if he sees by her face that she does not wish to return it he can refrain from bowing the next time. This is on the ground that "a lady, particularly an elderly one or a society leader perhaps, has so many acquaintances that she does not remember all the young men who have been presented." This, however, does not seem to settle the question conclusively, for it may be that the young man has quite as many acquaintances as the lady, even if an elderly one. After due consideration, it is our own opinion that both persons should bow simultaneously; perhaps in the case of very near-sighted persons a little latitude might be given, provided the fact of myopia can be clearly proved by medical evidence. There is, however, always danger in these exceptions to social rules, and therefore it may be safer for near-sighted people to bow in all cases of doubt, accustoming themselves to do this with uniform courtesy whether they are themselves recognised or not.

TOINETTE, nineteen, tall, dark, blue eyes, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony. Respondents must be tall, fair.

BESSY, eighteen, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony. Respondents must be about twenty, fair, good-looking.

TURRET RIGHT and **TURRET LEFT**, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies between eighteen and twenty. Turret Right is twenty-four, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music. Turret Left is twenty-one, tall, dark, black hair, hazel eyes, good-looking.

BASHFUL JOE, a signalman in the Royal Navy, and **FLASHING LIGHT**, a seaman in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Bashful Joe is twenty-two, tall, dark, of a loving disposition. Flashing Light is twenty-three, medium height, fair, blue eyes, fond of home and music. Respondents must be between seventeen and twenty-one.

THE BANSHIE'S WARNING.

DARK was the night: not a single star glistened
Up 'mid the depths of the sombre grey sky.
O'er the lone moorland the wind wildly whistled,
And heaped were the snow-flakes in drifts wide and high.

Within a low cottage a ruddy fire flickered,
Casting weird shadows on ceiling and wall.
Down the wide staircase a girl's figure fluttered,
And paused by the door in the dimly-lit hall.

Inside the room the farmer sat smoking,
And by the hearth sat the old, grey-haired dame.
She smiled as she bent o'er her worsted and needles,
Then turned about slowly and called him by name.

"Father," she said, and her gentle voice trembled.
The farmer looked at her with face stern and grim.
"You've seen Ronald Adair," he said, with a
mutter;

"And want to plead with me for Bessie and him."
"It is useless, I tell you; I've told you so often.
On the morrow comes Lord Oakwell to sue for her
hand."

Shall she marry a beggar while fortune awaits her,
A fortune—the noblest in all the broad land?

"No, no, let her prattle of love and that nonsense,
For this is as true as I sit in my chair—
I'd see her dead rather, with the cold sod above her,
Than see her the wife of that Ronald Adair!"

The dame's face grew white as the snow on the moor-
land,
And a glistening tear dimmed her gentle blue eye.
When out on the night wind, beside the low window,
Were heard the three notes of a wild, piercing cry.

Three times did it echo across the lone moorland,
And then died away with a low, moaning sigh.
While the mother sprang forward, her face blanched
with terror.

And said, in a whisper, "'Twas the banshee's wild
cry!"

"Three times did she shriek at our low cottage
window,
I saw her white robes as she swiftly flew by.
'Twas an evil sign, father, and I feel a foreboding
That one from our household before morning will
die."

"Tut! tut!" said the farmer, "'twas but the wind
blowing."
And he strode 'cross the room and flung open the
door,
Glanced carelessly 'round him, and then backward
staggered.

For his Bessie lay dead on the white oaken floor!

"You've killed her, you've killed her!" the mother
cried, wildly.

"She heard your fierce words as you sat in your
chair."

Your wish is fulfilled! She lies dead before you,
And you'll ne'er see her wed to brave Ronald
Adair!"

VIOLET and **DAISY**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Violet is seventeen, medium height, dark, fond of home and music. Daisy is seventeen, medium height, dark, fond of home and music. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-five.

TRAVELYAN'S DARLING, seventeen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about eighteen.

MERRY JACK, a clerk, eighteen, tall, dark, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about his own age.

MADEL and **LILY**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Madel is nineteen, fair hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Lily is eighteen, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing.

DIAMOND, seventeen, tall, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about eighteen.

LILY, **MAY** and **DAISY**, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Lily is twenty-two, medium height, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. May is twenty-three, medium height, of a loving disposition,

fond of home and children. Daisy is twenty-four, medium height, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

A MERRY IRISH LAD, tall, fair, would like to correspond with a good-looking young lady about eighteen or nineteen.

LILLIE L. and **AGNES**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen from twenty to twenty-five. Lillie L. is eighteen, tall, fair, good-looking, Agnes is nineteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes.

ADA, short, dark, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young gentleman between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-six.

ARTHUR and **LIONEL**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies about seventeen or eighteen. Arthur is nineteen, medium height, dark, good-looking. Lionel is twenty, medium height, fair.

CRYPTOGRAPH COMMUNICATOR and **HELIOGRAPH DELINEATOR** and **DIRECTOR OF NAVAL TELEGRAPHY**, two signalmen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Cryptograph Communicator and Heliograph Delineator is twenty-one, tall, fair, good-looking, fond of home and children. Director of Naval Telegraphy is twenty-five, tall, fair, good-looking, fond of home and music. Respondents must be from nineteen to twenty-one, fair, good-looking.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

NELLIE is responded to by—Smokesail, twenty-one, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, good-looking.

KATE by—Spritsail, twenty, medium height, auburn hair, hazel eyes, good-looking, fond of music and dancing.

LILLIE by—Morris.

BEN by—Sally, twenty-four, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes.

JIM by—Hetty, twenty-two, medium height, fair hair, dark eyes.

JAMES by—Ada H., medium height, black hair, brown eyes, good-looking.

THOMAS by—Lily F., medium height, brown hair, of a loving disposition, good-looking.

ROSE by—John, eighteen, brown hair, hazel eyes.

LILY by—J. B., seventeen, tall, brown eyes, good-looking.

FRED H. by—Carrie, eighteen, tall, dark, good-looking.

ARTHUR O. by—Alice, eighteen, tall, fair, good-looking.

OLIVE and **Ethel** by—E. M. and Friend. E. M. nineteen, tall, fair, his friend eighteen, tall, fair.

DARK-EYED MARGUERITE by—Jim, eighteen, medium height, good-looking.

PRETTY MARY by—Dick, twenty, medium height, dark hair, good-looking.

LILY by—A. R., twenty-three, fair, good-looking.

LILLIE by—Fred S., twenty, of a loving disposition, fond of children.

MAGGIE by—Blue-eyed Willie, twenty-three, fond of home and children.

JAMES by—F. M., twenty-five, medium height.

THOMAS by—A. D., twenty-three, medium height, fair.

CASTALY by—Maggie, twenty-six, tall, dark, of a loving disposition.

JAMES by—Nellie, twenty-three, tall, dark.

THOMAS by—Lizzie, twenty-two, medium height.

BERTH by—Kathleen, twenty-one, medium height, dark.

JAMES by—Pearl, twenty, tall, fair, grey eyes.

THOMAS by—Ruby, twenty-two, short, dark, blue eyes.

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†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily authors should retain copies.

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